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POEMS FROM HEINE



*In Preparation*

**POEMS**

BY

P. G. L. WEBB

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NISBET & CO., LTD.

# POEMS FROM HEINE

BY

PHILIP G. L. WEBB

C.B., C.B.E.



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## PREFACE

**I**N this volume I am republishing with alterations and amendments the contents of two previous volumes and am adding a large number of new translations.

The difficulty of translating Heine is notorious, and anyone bold enough to attempt the task can only hope for a partial success. I have tried for my part to steer a middle course between free paraphrase and literal fidelity, and by preserving as far as possible the original turns of metre and phrase, and adding nothing to the sometimes almost bald simplicity of the diction, I have endeavoured to retain some of that bitter-sweet flavour which is peculiar to Heine. But in any such process of transformation much of the poet's magic must inevitably evaporate.

The poems chosen for translation comprise most of the lyrics that have made the poet world-famous, as well as some specimens of the interesting narrative-poems to which Matthew Arnold in his essay on Heine has called special attention. Heine's Works are a rich mine that is not easily exhausted, and only want of time and skill has

prevented me from including many other poems well worthy of the author's reputation.

Few writers of modern Europe, whether of prose or of verse, are so various or so entertaining as Heine, and if this volume should induce even two or three readers to go to the fountain-head the translator will feel that his work, in itself a labour of love, has been more than amply rewarded.

P. G. L. W.

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# BOOK OF SONGS

## YOUNG SORROWS (1817-1821) ROMANCES

### BELSHAZZAR

THE midnight hour was drawing on ;  
All hushed in peace lay Babylon.

But up above in the king's own house  
The torches flare and the men carouse.

For there in the royal banquet hall  
Belshazzar held high festival.

The vassals sat in a shining line  
And emptied their goblets of sparkling wine.

The shout of the vassals, the goblets' ring,  
Enkindled the heart of the headstrong king.

His flushing cheeks began to shine ;  
His heart waxed bold, inspired by wine.

With blind and wicked pride possessed  
He blasphemed God in a ribald jest.



And his wild blaspheming and insolent boast  
Won loud applause from the vassal host.

The king called loud with eyes aflame :  
The swift slave ran, and back he came.

Many vessels of gold on his head he bore,  
From Jehovah's temple the plundered store.

And the king impelled by a wanton whim  
Seized a sacred chalice, filled full to the brim.

And draining the cup in breathless wise  
With foaming lips aloud he cries :

“ Jehovah ! thy power I here defy,  
The King of Babylon am I.”

But scarce was this word of horror spoke  
Ere secret remorse in the king's heart woke.

The yelling laughter was suddenly stilled,  
And deathly silence the palace filled.

And lo ! and lo ! on the wall so white  
A thing like a man's hand came in sight ;

And wrote and wrote on the wall so white  
In letters of fire, then vanished quite.

The king sat staring, and held his breath,  
With knocking knees and as pale as death.

Fear fell on the vassals, their blood ran chill,  
They sat, with never a word, stock still.

The wise men came, yet not one of them all  
Could read those letters of flame on the wall.

But ere the daylight came again,  
By his vassals' hands was Belshazzar slain !

## SONNETS TO MY MOTHER

### I

It is my wont to carry my head high,  
My manners oft are stiff and void of grace,  
If the king's self should look me in the face,  
I would not cast my eyes down, no, not I.

Yet, mother dear, be it again confessed,  
However proud and headstrong I may be,  
In thy sweet, blessed, gentle company  
Oft-times I am with humble fear possessed.

Is it thy spirit that doth my pride subdue,  
Thy lofty spirit that pierces all things through  
And flashing soars into the heaven's wide blue ?

Bitter it is, thrice bitter, to recall  
How oft my deeds have served thy heart to gall,  
That golden heart which loved me more than all.

## 2

In mood perverse I did from thee depart,  
Desiring through the whole wide world to rove,  
If I could anywhere discover love,  
And like a lover clasp it to my heart !

I sought love everywhere ; at every gate,  
In every street, I stretched out hands in prayer,  
Begging an alms of love, how small soe'er,—  
They only mocked and gave me chilling hate.

So still I fared in quest of love, and ever  
In quest of love, yet did I find love never,  
And homeward turned, sick and with pride subdued ;  
Then didst thou come with welcoming smile to  
meet me.  
And ah ! within thine eyes, as thou didst greet me,  
Was that sweet love I had so long pursued !

LYRICAL INTERMEZZO

1822-1823

I

'Twas in the lovely month of May,  
When all the buds were breaking,  
I felt love's secret impulse  
Within my heart awaking.

'Twas in the lovely month of May,  
When all the birds were chanting,  
I told thee of the passion  
Wherewith my soul was panting.

2

Full many gay bright blossoms  
Out of my sorrows arise,  
My tears are turned to flowers,  
To nightingales my sighs.

And if, dear child, thou wilt love me,  
To thee shall these flowers belong ;  
These nightingales at thy window  
Shall warble for thee their song.

## 3

The rose, the lily, the sun and the dove,  
I loved them all once in the rapture of love.  
I love them no more, for my sole delight  
Is the maiden so slight, so bright and so white,  
Who, being herself the source of love,  
Is rose and lily and sun and dove.

## 4

If I but look into thine eyes,  
My pain is stilled, my sorrow flies ;  
But if I kiss thy lips my wound  
Is wholly healed, and I am sound.

If I but lean upon thy breast,  
My soul with heavenly peace is blest ;  
But if thou sayest, " I love thee,"  
Then must I weep right bitterly.

## 5

The face so lovely and serene  
Lately when dreaming have I seen ;  
It is so sweet, so angel-bright,  
Yet pale with sorrow, pale and white.

The lips alone are red ; and they  
Soon by death's kiss are turned to grey,  
And quenched the light of paradise  
Which sparkled from those earnest eyes.



## 6

O let thy cheek on my cheek rest,  
Our tears together shall flow.  
And be my heart on thy heart pressed,  
Together their flames shall glow.

Then as our tears' tempestuous tide  
Falls on the flames' hot fire,  
I'll clasp thee closely to my side  
And die of love's desire.

## 7

My spirit on love's quest flieth  
And dives in the lily's bell ;  
The lily a faint song sigheth  
Of her that I love so well.

The song doth tremble and waver  
As it were her mouth's own kiss,  
Whereof I had once the savour,  
That sweet strange hour of bliss.

## 8

For many æons changeless  
The stars in heaven shine,  
And gazing at each other  
With love's desire they pine.

They speak a mystic language  
Most eloquent, most grand,  
Yet none of the famous linguists  
This speech can understand.

But I have learned its secret  
And cannot forget it again ;  
The face of my dearest gave me  
The key that has made it plain.

## 9

On wings of poesy flying,  
I'll bear thee, beloved, away,  
To where by the Ganges is lying  
A sweet spot fairer than day.

There blooms the rosiest of bowers  
Under the moonlight clear ;  
And there the lotus flowers  
Wait for their sister dear.

The violets whisper and flutter,  
And gaze at the stars up above ;  
The roses murmuring utter  
Sweet secret stories of love.

Gazelles so gentle and clever  
Come hopping closer to hear ;  
The flood of the holy river  
Booms in the distance far.

There let us, love, earthward sinking,  
    Beneath a palm-tree alight,  
And love's blest potion drinking,  
    Dream one long dream of delight.

## 10

The lotus-flower is troubled  
    Under the sun's hot light,  
And with her head bowed downward  
    She dreams and waits for the night.

The moon, who is her lover,  
    Awakens her with his rays,  
For him she fondly unveileth  
    Her innocent flower face.

She blooms and glows and sparkles,  
    And dumbly she stares above ;  
She exhales and weeps and trembles  
    For love and the pain of love.

## 12

Thou lov'st not me, thou lov'st not me,  
    Small trouble does this bring ;  
For if I do but look at thee  
    I'm happy as a king.

Thou hatest me, thou hatest me,  
 So speak those lips of red ;  
 But kissed by them, child, let me be,  
 And I am comforted.

## 13

Swear not, but give me just one kiss,  
 In woman's oath no credence is.  
 Thy word is sweet, yet sweeter far  
 The kisses I have stolen are !  
 These having, in these I put my faith—  
 A word is nought but idle breath.

. . . . .

Swear, dearest, swear, if swear thou must ;  
 In thy bare word I put my trust !  
 I lay my head upon thy breast,  
 And I believe that I am blest,—  
 Believe that for eternity  
 And longer still thou lovest me.

## 16

Dearest, tell me true to-day :  
 Art thou not a child of dream,  
 Such as some hot summer's day  
 On a poet's brain may gleam ?

Ah, but no ! for lips so red,  
Such bright glances from such eyes,  
Such a sweet and pretty maid—  
That could poet ne'er devise.

Basilisks and vampires lewd,  
Monstrous shapes and dragons great,  
Fabulous beasts of evil brood—  
These a poet can create.

But thyself, child, and thy wiles,  
And thy face like Paradise,  
And those dear, deceitful smiles—  
These could poet ne'er devise.

18

No plaint I make, and though my heart may  
break,  
O love for ever lost, no plaint I make.  
While thou all shining goest in diamonds bright  
No brightness shines within thy heart's dark  
night.

Long since I knew. In dreams I saw thee plain,  
And saw the night that in thy soul doth reign ;  
I saw the serpent feeding on thy heart ;  
I saw, my love, how very sad thou art.



## 19

Yea! thou art sad too and no plaint I make—  
Belovèd, sad indeed we both must be!  
Until death come our tortured hearts to break,  
Belovèd, sad indeed we both must be.

The scorn which curls thy lip, I see it well,  
And see the anger flashing in thine eye,  
And see the pride which makes thy bosom swell,—  
And yet, and yet, thou art as sad as I.

About those lips an unseen sorrow lurks,  
A hidden tear clouds thine eye's clarity,  
A secret wound in thy proud bosom irks,—  
Belovèd, sad indeed we both must be.

## 20

I hear the flute and the fiddle  
And trumpets blaring between;  
And there, the bride in the middle,  
Is dancing my heart's own queen.

I hear the kettle-drum throbbing  
And drone of the bagpipe deep;  
Betwixt I hear sighing and sobbing—  
'Tis the good angels weep.

## 21

Hast thou forgotten utterly  
How long thy heart belonged to me,  
That small heart so sweet, so compact of deceit,  
That nothing could be more deceitful and  
sweet ?

And hast thou forgotten the pain and the love,  
Which almost my heart to misery drove ?  
I know not if love were the greater, or pain,  
This only I know, that great were the twain !

## 22

And if of my heart's desolation  
The little flowers but knew,  
Their tears of consolation  
Would fall like healing dew.

And if my lovelorn sadness  
The nightingales could divine,  
They'd warble songs of gladness  
For sorrow's anodyne.

And if how my soul is riven  
The little gold stars could guess,  
They'd come down out of their heaven  
To comfort my distress.

But all are cold and unheeding,  
One only my pain hath known—  
For her my heart is bleeding,  
For her and her alone.

## 23

Why are the roses so pale of hue,  
O say, my true love, why ?  
Why in the green grass violets blue  
So speechless are and shy ?

Why does the lark soar into the skies  
Singing so sad a chant ?  
Why does a corpse-like odour rise  
From the sweet balsam plant ?

Why shines the sun on the fields below  
So chilly and full of gloom ?  
Why does the earth so ash-grey show  
And desolate as a tomb ?

And why so sad and forlorn am I,  
My dear love, say perdie !  
O say, my heart's own treasure, why  
Thou hast forsaken me ?

## 24

They whispered many stories,  
And much they found to scold ;  
But wherefore my heart so sore is,  
That secret they never told.

They raked up everything evil,  
They shook their wise heads and grieved ;  
They nicknamed me the devil,  
And thou hast all believed.

Yet that which was far the saddest,  
That thing they have never guessed ;  
The saddest thing and the maddest,  
I carry that locked in my breast.

## 25

The lime was in blossom, the nightingale sang,  
The sun smiled on us with friendliest cheer :  
Then, kissing me, into my arms you sprang,  
And held me clasped to your bosom near.

The leaves fell ; hoarse was the raven's cry ;  
The sun shed down its disconsolate light ;  
We bade each other an icy " Good-bye,"  
You curtsied—your curtsey was very polite !

## 30

The violets blue her eyes that light,  
The roses red of her cheeks' delight,  
The lilies white of her hands so slight,  
They blossom and blossom for ever and aye,  
And only her heart hath withered away.

## 31

The sky is so blue, and the earth is so bright,  
And the zephyrs are breathing so balmy and light,  
And the meadow so gaily with flowers is dight,  
Which sparkle and glitter with dewdrops white,  
And the people are everywhere filled with delight :  
Yet would that I lay in my grave at rest,  
Clasping my dead love close to my breast.

## 33

A pine-tree stands in the northland  
Alone on a bleak bare height.  
It sleeps, while the ice and snowflakes  
Enwrap it in raiment white.

It dreams a dream of a palm-tree  
Afar in an eastern land,  
Who silent and lone on the hill-side  
Mourns 'mid the burning sand.

## 35

When my love first went away,  
Laughter died upon that day,  
Folks made ribald jests enow,  
But to laugh I knew not how.

When I lost her utterly,  
Weeping too was done for me ;  
Nigh heartbroken am I now,  
But to weep I know not how.

## 36

Out of my deepest woe  
These little songs I make ;  
Their musical wings they shake,  
And straight to her heart they go.

They found to my love their way,  
But back they have come and they cry,  
They cry and they will not tell why,  
Nor what they have seen there say.

## 38

Full many an image rises  
Out of its grave to tell  
How once in times forgotten  
I used near thee to dwell.

About the streets a-dreaming  
In day-time I would gad ;  
The people would mark me and wonder,  
I was so silent and sad.

At night-time it was better,  
The streets all empty were ;  
I and my shadow together  
Went noiselessly everywhere.

My way with echoing footsteps  
Over the bridge I took ;  
The moon, from clouds emerging,  
Watched me with sad, grave look.

I lingered before thy dwelling,  
I stood and gazed above,  
I gazed up to thy window—  
My heart was sick with love.

Thou hast, I know, from that window  
Looked down full many a night,  
And seen me stand like a statue  
There in the pale moon-light.

## 39

A boy is in love with a maiden,  
But she for another has sighed ;  
That other has chosen another  
And promised to make her his bride.



The maiden marries in anger  
The first and comeliest lad,  
Who chances to cross her pathway ;  
This drives her young lover mad.

It is an old, old story,  
Yet every time it is new ;  
And he to whom it happens—  
His heart is broken in two.

## 40

If other lips be singing  
The song my dearest sang,  
Sharp sorrow moves me, wringing  
My heart with sudden pang.

Urged by a dim dark longing  
To the wild wood I go,  
And there the tears come thronging  
From my exceeding woe.

## 42

My darling, we sat there together  
So snug in the little boat,  
By night in the windless weather,  
On the great sea afloat.

The Magic Isle entrancing  
All dim in the moonlight lay ;  
We saw the ghostly dancing,  
We heard the sweet music play.

Loud rang the music's gladness,  
Wild grew the dance with glee ;  
But we sailed by in sadness  
Over the wide, wide sea.

## 43

Bells ringing, voices singing,  
They seem to call to me,  
Forgotten memories bringing  
From land of faerie,

Where flowers in golden spaces  
Of evening twilight pine,  
Scanning each other's faces  
With tender love-sick eyne ;—

Where all the trees have voices  
And sing in choral wise,  
And the loud stream rejoices  
In dancing melodies ;

And love-songs more enchanting  
Than ever ear did meet,  
Thy love-sick soul leave panting  
With love-sick rapture sweet.

O would that thither flying  
I might at last find rest,  
And done with grief and sighing  
Be ever free and blest.

Ah ! oft I see it dreaming,  
That land so glad, so fair,  
But with the morn's first gleaming  
It melts into thin air.

## 45

On mornings of summer sunshine  
I saunter my garden round.  
The flowers are whispering and talking,  
But I make never a sound.

The flowers are whispering and talking,  
My face they pitying scan :  
“ O be not unkind to our sister,  
Thou woe-begone haggard man ! ”

## 48

On thy small cheeks so dainty  
Summer, hot summer, lies ;  
Thy little heart holds winter,  
Winter with all its ice.

Soon, dearest, this will alter,  
Each season change its part,  
And on thy cheeks will be winter,  
And summer within thy heart.

## 49

Two friends when they are parting  
Clasp hands to say good-bye,  
And then they fall a-weeping  
And heave full many a sigh.

We shed no tears, we uttered  
No syllable of sorrow ;  
The tears and the lamenting,  
They followed on the morrow.

## 50

They sat round the tea-table speaking  
Of love and the ways one loved ;  
The men for fine phrases were seeking,  
The ladies were melting and moved.

“ I favour the love platonic,”  
The starched old statesman said ;  
His wife gave a smile ironic,  
Then sighing she shook her head.

The canon clinches the question :

“ Love never should be, say I,  
Too fierce, or it spoils the digestion.”  
The maiden murmurs : “ But why ? ”

“ Nay, love is a mighty passion ! ”

The countess cries mournfully,  
Then turns in friendly fashion  
And hands his lordship his tea.

One place, my dear, at the table

Was empty, for you stayed away ;  
And you of your love had been able  
Such sweet pretty things to say !

## 51

My songs indeed are poisoned—

How could they not so be ?

Thy poison has verily entered

Into the life-blood of me.

My songs indeed are poisoned—

How could they not so be ?

I bear in my heart many serpents,

And also, belovèd, thee.

## 53

I stand on the mountain summit,  
And tears come into my eyes.  
“O were I a bird,” I murmur,  
And heave ten thousand sighs.

For if I were but a swallow,  
I'd fly, my child, to thee,  
And there beneath thy window  
My little nest should be.

Or were I a nightingale, then too  
I'd fly, my child, to thee,  
And sing thee all night my love-songs  
From out the green linden tree.

Or if I were a pigeon,  
Then straight to thy heart I'd fly;  
For thou art kind to pigeons,  
And heedest the pigeon's cry.

## 54

My carriage is slowly rolling  
Through pleasant woodland green,  
Through flowery valleys transfigured  
By sunlight's magic sheen.

I sit and I dream and I ponder,  
And of my belovèd I think ;  
Three phantoms come up to the carriage  
And greet me with nod and wink.

They leap around making faces,  
Half-scoffing and yet half-shy,  
Then whirling together like mist-wreaths  
They grin and go scurrying by.

## 55

I wept while I was dreaming,  
I dreamt that thou hadst died.  
I woke, and the tear was standing  
Still there on my cheek undried.

I wept while I was dreaming,  
I dreamt thou wert gone from me,  
I woke, and I still was weeping  
Long time and bitterly.

I wept while I was dreaming,  
I dreamt thou wert kind to me yet,  
I woke, and now for ever  
My cheeks with tears are wet.



The night it is wet and chilly,  
The autumn wind doth moan ;  
Wrapt close in my grey mantle  
I ride through the wood alone.

And as I go riding, riding,  
My thoughts rush onward before,  
And carry me lightly, gaily,  
To my belovèd's door.

The watch-dogs bark, the retainers  
Come out and the torches bring ;  
I rush up the winding staircase,  
Making my spurs to ring.

In the warm carpeted chamber,  
So fragrant, so bright to the eye,  
The lovely maiden awaits me—  
Into her arms I fly.

The wind in the leaves goes sighing,  
The oak-tree speaketh, meseems :  
“ What ails thee, thou foolish horseman,  
With these thy foolish dreams ? ”

## 59

A star is falling earthward  
From its bright heaven above !  
This star I see a-falling,  
It is the star of love !

The blossoms and leaves in showers  
Fall from the apple-tree ;  
Then come the mischievous breezes  
And whirl them about in glee.

The swan upon the fish-pond  
Sings, swimming to and fro,  
And ever more softly singing  
Dives to his grave below.

Now all is dark and silent !  
Leaves, blossoms, are seen no more ;  
The star has crumbled and vanished,  
The song of the swan is o'er.

## 61

'Twas midnight cold and all things slept ;  
I wandered through the wood and wept ;  
The trees, when they heard my mournful ditty,  
Woke up and nodded their heads in pity.

## 63

Where I am, the shadows darkle  
All around me, cold and frore,  
Since thine eyes with their bright sparkle,  
Dearest, flash on me no more.

For me now no longer dawning,  
Love's sweet star hath vanished quite ;  
At my feet the abyss is yawning—  
O receive me, ancient night !

## 64

Night weighed upon my eyelids,  
Lead on my mouth pressed hard,  
With brain and heart all stiffened  
I lay in the churchyard.

How long it was I know not  
That deep sleep held me locked ;  
I woke up and heard some one  
Who on my grave-stone knocked.

“ Why risest thou not, Heinrich ?  
The eternal day has shone,  
The dead have all arisen,  
The eternal joy begun.”

I cannot rise, belovèd,  
I am still blind as night ;  
Mine eyes have through long weeping  
Lost utterly their sight.

“ I’ll drive with kisses, Heinrich,  
The dark night from thine eyes ;  
And thou shalt see the angels,  
And the light of Paradise.”

I cannot rise, belovèd,  
My flesh bleeds evermore,  
Where thou with one word bitter  
Hast stabbed my heart full sore.

“ I’ll lay right gently, Heinrich,  
My hand upon thy heart ;  
Then will it cease from bleeding,  
And healed be all its smart.”

I cannot rise, belovèd,  
My head too bleeds away ;  
For there I shot a bullet,  
When thou wast snatched away.

“ With my hair’s tresses, Heinrich,  
I’ll staunch that gaping wound,  
Press back the flowing blood-stream,  
And make thy head once more sound.”

So soft, so sweet the pleading,  
I could no more gainsay,  
Fain would I to my dearest  
Arise and take my way.

Then, all my old wounds bursting,  
With sudden force did break  
From head and heart the blood-stream,  
And lo ! I am awake.

## 65

The old and wicked ballads,  
The evil dreams unblest,  
Come fetch a mighty coffin,  
And lay them all to rest.

Much will I bury within it,  
I will not yet say, what ;  
The coffin must be bigger  
Than Heidelberg's great vat.

And fetch a hearse to hold it  
With planks of solid strength,  
So big that it surpasses  
The bridge at Mainz in length.

And fetch me too twelve giants,  
Who must be larger in bone  
Than even the great Saint Christoph  
In the minster of Cologne.

They must the coffin carry  
And sink it deep in the sea ;  
For such a mighty coffin  
Mighty the grave must be.

Wist ye wherefore the coffin  
So strong and heavy must be ?  
My love is buried within it,  
My love and my misery.

## APPENDIX

### I

Lovely, bright, and golden star,  
Greet my dearest from afar,  
Tell her that I alter never—  
Heart-sick, pale, and hers for ever.

### 6

All flowers lift up their faces  
To gaze on the shining sun,  
And to the shining ocean  
All rivers downward run.

All songs to my shining mistress  
On wings melodious go—  
O take her my tears and my sighings  
Ye songs so heavy with woe.

## THE RETURN HOME

1823-1824

## I

On my life of utter darkness  
Once there gleamed a vision bright ;  
Now that vision bright has faded,  
I am all begirt with night.

Children in the darkness playing  
Feel the gloom their spirits cloud,  
And to drive away their terror  
Cheerfully they sing aloud.

I, a foolish child, am singing  
In my hour of darkest care ;  
And my song, though never so joyless,  
Has released me from despair.

## 2

I know not what thing it presages  
That I am so full of woe ;  
A tale from the early ages  
Haunts me and will not go.

'Tis cool, the sun is declining,  
And quietly flows the Rhine ;  
The top of the hill is shining  
In the evening light divine.



She sits above the river,  
That maiden wondrous fair,  
Her golden jewels quiver,  
She combs her golden hair.

She combs with a comb that is golden,  
And sings the while a song,  
A melody strange and impassioned,  
A melody sweet and strong.

The boatman in his pinnacle  
Is seized with a wild despair ;  
He sees not the rocks that menace,  
He gazes up into the air.

I trow that the waters will swallow  
Boatman and boat ere long ;  
Such doom doth the victim follow  
Who hears the Lorelei's song.

## 3

My heart, my heart is heavy,  
Though May is frolic and bright ;  
I stand and lean by the lime-tree,  
On the old bastion height.

Beneath is gently flowing  
The tranquil blue-watered moat ;  
A boy, who sings as he fishes,  
Goes drifting by in a boat.

Beyond, like a gay little picture,  
There lies a charming scene,  
Of villas and gardens and people,  
And cattle and pasturage green.

The maids are bleaching linen,  
And dance in the grass around ;  
And diamonds spurt from the mill-wheel—  
I hear its low humming sound.

A sentry-box is standing  
The old grey tower below ;  
A young red-coated soldier  
Is pacing to and fro.

He trifles with his musket,  
Which gleams in the sunshine red ;  
He presents the gun to his shoulder—  
Would God he would shoot me dead.

## 4

I roam in the wood a-weeping,  
The throstle sits on the tree ;  
She says to me, hopping and cheeping,  
“ Prythee, what aileth thee ? ”

Ask that of thy sisters the swallows,  
My child, for 'tis they know best,  
Who, in the eaves' cunning hollows,  
By my love's window nest.

## 5

The night is wet and stormy,  
And no star lights the sky ;  
The branches creak in the forest  
As I go silently by.

From the huntsman's lonely dwelling  
There flickers a rush-light dim ;  
It shall not tempt me to enter,  
So gloomy the place and grim.

There sits in the leathern arm-chair  
The grandmother, old and blind,  
Uncanny and stiff, like an image,  
And never a word can she find.

Striding about and swearing,  
The forester's red-headed son,  
Breaks into scornful laughter  
And throws at the wall his gun.

The fair girl spins and moistens  
The flax with her soft tear-showers ;  
Whimpering at her footstool  
Her father's dachshund cowers.

## 6

When once on a journey I happened  
My darling's people to find,  
Sister and father and mother,  
They gave me a greeting kind.

They asked me how I was doing,  
Then took up themselves the tale :  
I had not the least bit altered,  
Only my face was pale.

I asked after cousins and uncles  
And all that tedious crowd,  
And after the little puppy  
Whose bark was never loud.

I then, by the way, asked after  
The married one so dear ;  
In friendly words they answered,  
And told me her time was near.

And friendly congratulations  
I whispered lovingly,  
And bade them give many thousand  
Kind messages from me.

Then chimed in the little sister :  
" Our puppy so small and fine  
Grew big and then went mad, so  
We drowned it in the Rhine."

The child is like my belovèd,  
And when she smiles most so ;  
She has the very same eyes  
That wrought me such bitter woe.

## 7

We sat in the fisherman's cottage,  
And over the sea did gaze ;  
The evening mists were rising,  
And veiled the sky with haze.

The lamps in the lighthouse tower  
Were kindled, light by light,  
And on the far horizon  
One ship was still in sight.

We spoke of storm and shipwreck,  
The life of the sailor boy,  
Poised between sky and water,  
And fear of death and joy.

We spoke of far-distant countries,  
Of North and South we spoke,  
And the weird, outlandish customs  
Of weird, outlandish folk.

In fragrance and light by the Ganges  
Blossom the giant trees ;  
And fair still beings worship  
The lotus on their knees.

In Lapland the people are dirty,  
Flat-headed, broad-jawed and small;  
They cower by the fireside baking  
Their fish, and they squeak and they squall.

Wistful the maidens listened,  
Till silent at last all sate;  
The ship could be seen no longer,  
The darkness was so great.

## 8

Beautiful fisher-maiden,  
Pull in thy boat to land;  
Come hither and sit beside me,  
And talk to me, hand in hand.

Thy little head on my heart lay,  
And all untroubled be;  
No fear hast thou, when daily  
Thou trustest the stormy sea.

Like the wild sea my heart is,  
With storms and ebb and flow,  
And many a pearly jewel  
Shines in its depths below.

## 9

The moon is up and cresting  
The waves with silver rays,  
My love in mine arms is resting,  
Her head on my heart she lays.

The lovely child is clinging,  
As I lie by the lone sea-strand ;  
“What song is the wild wind singing ?  
Why trembles thy snow-white hand ?”

“Those are no winds go sighing,  
But mermaids’ songs they be ;  
And it is my sisters crying  
Who were drowned long since in the sea.”

## 10

Resting on the clouds, the moon  
Like a great pomegranate gloweth,  
And a path of golden light  
O’er the pale grey sea she throweth.

By the shore I walk alone,  
Where the wan white waves are falling,  
Many and sweet the words I hear,  
Sweet words from the water calling.



Ah ! the night is all too long,  
Needs my heart must speak its pleasure—  
Lovely nixies, come ye forth,  
Sing and dance your magic measure !

Take my head upon your lap,  
Fill me, body and soul, with blisses !  
Sing, caress me till I die,  
Drawing out my life with kisses !

## II

In the mirky clouds enshrouded,  
Fast asleep the great gods lie,  
And I listen to their snoring  
As the storm goes sweeping by.

Wild the storm and frail the vessel—  
How shall it escape disaster ?  
Ah ! what power those winds can bridle ?  
Curb those waves that know no master ?

Nought can stay the tempest's fury,  
Mast and planks from groaning keep—  
In my cloak then will I wrap me,  
Like the gods, and go to sleep.

## 15

At morning time if I happen  
To pass thy dwelling near,  
How sweet it is at the window  
To see thee, dear child, appear.

Thy dark brown eyes my coming  
Wistfully seem to scan :  
“ Who art thou, and what ails thee,  
Thou strange and haggard man ? ”

I am a German poet,  
Famous in Germany ;  
Name all the very best names,  
And thou wilt be naming me.

And, child, the thing that ails me  
Ails many in Germany ;  
Name all the very worst woes  
And mine too named will be.

## 16

The great sea sparkled far and wide  
In eve's last sunshine gleaming ;  
We sat the lone fishing-house beside,  
We sat there speechless and dreaming.

The mists came up, the billows swelled,  
The sea-gulls flew wildly wheeling ;  
Out of thy lovely eyes there welled  
Tears, which were downward stealing.

I saw them falling on thy hand,  
And on my knees then sinking,  
As there they fell on thy white hand,  
I knelt the hot tears drinking.

Since then is my body marred and shrunk,  
My soul dies longing-laden ;—  
For deadly poison have I drunk,  
The tears of that ill-starred maiden.

## 18

On yonder far horizon  
All cloudlike seems to swim  
The city with its towers,  
In evening twilight dim.

Ruffling the water's surface,  
A gust of wet wind blows ;  
The boatman in my wherry  
With mournful measure rows.

The sun once more emerges  
Shining out over the sea,  
And shows me where my dearest  
Was lost for ever to me.

## 22

The night is still ; no echoes awaken  
The streets where my dearest dwelt of yore ;  
Though she long since has the town forsaken,  
Her house stands yet where it stood before.

There stands too a man, who upward gazing  
Doth wring his hands in sorrow's despite ;  
I see his face, and—O sight amazing—  
'Tis I who stands there in the dim moonlight

O phantom, O comrade pale of face !  
Why dost thou mimic my lovesick woe,  
All I have suffered in this same place,  
So many a night, so long ago ?

## 23

How canst thou sleep so calmly,  
And know I am alive ?  
The old passion overcomes me,  
And then my fetters I rive.

Know'st thou the ancient ballad,  
How in the midnight gloom  
A dead boy came to his sweetheart  
And dragged her down to his tomb ?

Believe me, lovely maiden,  
Sweet child of witchery,  
I am alive and am stronger  
Than all the dead men be !

## 24

The maiden sleeps in her chamber,  
Trembling the moon looks in ;  
Outside there is singing and playing,  
A dance and a merry din.

“ I must look and see from my window  
Who doth such uproar raise.”  
There stands a skeleton fiddling,  
And sings this song as he plays :

“ To dance with me once hast promised,  
Promised and broken thy vow,  
To-night there's a ball in the churchyard,  
Come thither, and dance with me now.”

He lures from the house the maiden,  
And drags her resistless along ;  
She follows the skeleton striding  
Onward with fiddle and song.

He fiddles and hops and dances,  
And rattles his bones to the tune,  
His skull goes mopping and mowing,  
Uncanny by light of the moon.

## 25

As gazing on her picture  
I stood in a deep trance,  
Lo ! life began to kindle  
In that dear countenance.

Upon her lips there trembled  
A smile of rare delight,  
And as with tears of sorrow  
Her lovely eyes grew bright.

And my tears too began then  
To flow right bitterly—  
And ah, I cannot believe it,  
That thou art lost to me !

## 26

Ah me, unhappy Atlas ! for a world  
I needs must bear, the whole great world of  
sorrows.

I bear what is past bearing, and within me  
My heart is near to breaking.

Proud heart, 'tis thou alone hast willed it so !  
For joy thou wouldest have—yea, joy eternal,  
Or else eternal torment, and, proud heart,  
Thou hast eternal torment !

## 27

The years are coming and going,  
And generations depart,  
But one thing abideth ever,  
The love I bear in my heart.

Ah! might I but once more behold thee,  
And falling upon my knee,  
Say with my dying utterance :  
“ Lady, I worship thee ! ”

## 28

I dreamt : as the moon and stars above  
Were shining with baleful ray,  
I came to the town where dwells my love,  
Hundreds of miles away.

I came to her house, and there I knelt  
And kissed the stone that oft  
The light brush of her gown had felt,  
And her foot's pressure soft.

The night was long, the night was chill,  
And chill was the threshold stone ;  
A pale face peered from the window sill,  
And round it the moonlight shone.

29

What means this lonely tear then,  
That stays and dims mine eye ?  
It lingers there a relic  
From old times long gone by.

It had many glittering sisters,  
But they have all vanished quite,  
Gone like my sorrows and pleasure,  
Vanished in wind and night.

Like mist have also vanished  
The little stars of blue,  
Which smiled on those pleasures and sorrows  
And pierced my heart right through.

Alas ! my love has vanished  
Itself, like idle air !  
Begone and vanish also,  
Thou ancient and lonely tear !

30

The pale autumnal half-moon  
Peers from the cloudy sky ;  
All lonely the quiet parsonage  
Standeth the churchyard nigh.



The mother reads in the Bible,  
The son he stares at the light ;  
One daughter sleepily stretches,  
The younger one speaks outright :

“ O God, how dull this place is !  
The days pass wearily ;  
And if there is not a funeral  
There’s never a thing to see.”

The mother looks up from her reading :  
“ That’s wrong, for not more than four  
Have died since they buried thy father  
Out there by the churchyard door.”

The elder daughter says, yawning :  
“ I will not starve here in the cold,  
I’ll go to the baron to-morrow,  
He loves me and has much gold.”

The son bursts into laughter :  
“ Three sportsmen carouse at the inn,  
Who rake in money, and gladly  
Will show me how to win.”

The mother she flings her Bible  
Right in his skinny face :  
“ Accursed boy, as a robber  
Dost wish to end thy days ? ”

They hear a tap at the window,  
They see a beckoning hand ;  
Outside in his black priests' cassock  
Doth the dead father stand.

## 31

There is a wild wind blowing,  
With storms of rain and snow ;  
I sit at the window gazing  
Into the dark below.

There glimmers, advancing slowly,  
A tiny and lonely spark ;  
A little old dame with her lanthorn  
Comes ambling along in the dark.

I trow she has been buying,  
For her tall daughter's sake,  
Good meal and eggs and butter  
Wherewith to knead a cake.

At home, by the fireside blinking,  
The daughter lies in her chair ;  
And over her sweet eyes tumble  
The locks of her golden hair.

## 32

'Tis thought that I am pining  
In bitter love-sick woe,  
And I myself, like the others,  
At last believe it so.

Thou little one with the large eyes,  
How often to thee did I say—  
My love was beyond all telling,  
And eating my heart away.

Yet only within my chamber  
Have I in such wise spoke,  
And ah! when I stood in thy presence  
My silence was unbroke.

For there were evil angels,  
Who gagged me and made me dumb;  
And ah! through these evil angels  
Hath all my misery come.

## 39

The three holy kings came out of the East  
And everywhere asked their way:  
“Which is the road to Bethlehem?  
Good lads and lasses, say.”

But young nor old the way could tell,  
And the kings fared on afar,  
Led by a bright and cheerful light  
Which streamed from a golden star.

When the star stood still o'er Joseph's house,  
They entered, their presents bringing;  
The ox was lowing, the baby crowing,  
The three holy kings were singing.

## 40

My child, we once were children,  
Two children small and gay;  
We crept up into the henhouse,  
And played hide-and-seek in the hay.

We crowed just as the cocks crow,  
Our "cock-a-doodle-doo"  
Made passing folks imagine  
'Twas really cocks that crew.

The boxes in the courtyard  
With rugs we overlaid,  
And there we lived together  
And a stately palace made.

The neighbour's ancient tabby  
Would often come and call,  
We made her bows, we simpered,  
Paid compliments and all.

We asked her how her health was  
In a friendly, affectionate way ;  
To many old cats since those days  
We have had the same thing to say.

And often, like grown-up people,  
We sat and talked sensibly,  
Lamenting that nowadays nothing  
Was as good as it used to be.

How piety, love and friendship  
Had utterly passed away,  
How coffee got always dearer,  
And money less, day by day.

Gone by are the games of childhood,  
And everything goes by—  
Money, the world and its history,  
Love, friendship and piety.

## 42

As the moon with sudden radiance  
Pierces the dark veil of night,  
So from out time's dusky shadows  
Dawns on me a vision bright.

On the deck we all were seated,  
Floating proudly down the Rhine,  
And its banks, all green with summer,  
In the evening sun did shine.

At the feet of a fair lady  
Musing dreamily I lay ;  
O'er her sweet and pallid features  
Did the red-gold sunlight play.

Lutes were ringing, boys were singing,  
Music everywhere and glee !  
And the sky was blue above us,  
And our hearts were blithe and free.

Hill and castle, wood and meadow,  
Fairy-like they floated by ;—  
And I saw the whole bright picture  
Mirrored in my lady's eye.

## 43

I saw in a dream my belovèd,  
A woe-begone woman, forlorn,  
Her beauty once so radiant  
All faded, marred and worn.

One child by the hand she was leading,  
And one on her arm she bore,  
Her step and her mien and her garments  
Told plain of penury sore.

She staggered across the market,  
And meeting me there on the way  
She gazed at me ; then gently  
And sadly to her I say :

“ Come with me to my dwelling,  
For thou art pale and weak ;  
With might and main I'll labour  
Thy food and drink to seek.

“ And I will protect and cherish  
Those children who cling to thee there,  
And, more than them all, thine own self,  
Thou pitiful child of despair.

“ The love that I have borne thee,  
I'll ever a secret keep,  
And when thou diest, I'll sit me  
Beside thy grave and weep.”

## 45

Only wait, be not impatient  
If the memory of old wrongs  
Leave an undertone of sadness  
Even in my latest songs.

Only wait, for soon this echo  
Of past grief will cease to ring,  
And new songs, like flowers in Maytime,  
From my healèd heart will spring.

48

Do not, heart, thy sorrow cherish  
But endure thy fate ; for spring  
Once again to thee will bring  
All that winter made to perish.

And how much is still left over !  
And the world, how fair it is !  
There, my heart, lies all thy bliss,  
If thou meet it as a lover !

49

Thou art, love, like a flower,  
So chaste and sweet and fair ;  
I look at thee, and sorrow  
Steals o'er me unaware.

Meseems that my hands in blessing  
Upon thy head are placed,  
Praying that God may keep thee  
So fair and sweet and chaste.

50

Child ! it would have been thy ruin,  
And right earnestly I strove  
So that thy dear heart might never  
Feel for me the pangs of love.



Nevertheless it almost pained me  
When this task so easy proved ;  
Many a time I fell a-musing :  
What if after all thou loved !

## 51

When I in my bed am lying,  
Sunk deep in pillows and night,  
A sweet and charming image  
Hovers before my sight.

And when a deep still slumber  
Mine eyelids haply seals,  
Into my world of dreamland  
This image softly steals.

Yet with the dream at morning  
It never melts away,  
But in my heart I bear it  
All through the livelong day.

## 52

Maiden with the mouth so rosy,  
With the eyes so sweet and kind,  
My belovèd little maiden,  
Thou art ever in my mind.

Long are now the winter evenings,  
Would beside thee I might be,  
In the dear familiar chamber  
Sitting, whispering to thee.

To my lips I fain would press it,  
That small lily hand of thine,  
Fain with tears I would bedew it,  
That small lily hand of thine.

## 53

Though outdoors be driving snow,  
Though it hail and though it blow,  
Rattling every window pane :  
Yet I never will complain.  
In my heart lie all the while  
Love's own portrait and spring's smile.

## 55

Does not my pale wan face betray  
How love is my undoing ?  
And wilt thou yet that my proud mouth  
Should beggar-like be suing ?

This mouth is far too proud for ought  
But kisses and light love-making ;  
Perchance it will utter a mocking word  
The while my heart is breaking.

## 56

“Dearest friend, thou art in love,  
Smitten sore with Cupid’s dart ;  
Ever darker grows thy brain,  
Ever brighter grows thine heart.

“Dearest friend, thou art in love,  
And thou wilt confess it not,  
But I see the heart’s bright fire  
Through thy waistcoat glowing hot.”

## 57

I wished with thee to tarry,  
Sit by thy side and rest ;  
Needs must thou from me hurry,  
So many duties pressed.

I said that my soul sighed after  
Thee always, and only thee ;  
Then didst thou burst into laughter,  
And curtsey derisively.

Thou hast increased the burden  
Of my heart-broken distress,  
And even denied me the guerdon  
Of one last parting caress.

Yet think not I'll blow out my brains, dear,  
Though fate be never so sore !  
For every one of these pains, dear,  
I've suffered already before.

## 58

Thine eyes are sapphires raining light  
Most lovely and most sweet,  
O three times happy is that man  
Whom with their love they greet.

Thine heart, it is a diamond  
That sparkling facets shows,  
O three times happy is that man  
For whom with love it glows.

Thy lips are rubies—fairer stones  
All vainly would one seek,  
O three times happy is that man  
To whom their love they speak.

Could I but know that happy man,  
And find him all alone  
In the green wood—his happiness  
Would soon, I trow, be flown.

60

This world and this life, they are all little bits—  
A German professor must lend me his wits.  
He'll gather together life's various matters,  
And a logical system construct from the scraps ;  
And with his night-cap and his night-gown  
tatters  
He'll patch up the universe—if there are gaps.

62

To-night they are giving a party,  
And the house is brightly lit.  
Up there at the window a shadow  
Doth hither and thither flit.

Thou seest me not ; in darkness  
I stand here alone and apart ;  
And still less canst thou see down  
Into my darkened heart.

My darkened heart—it loves thee,  
It breaks for love of thee,  
And pants and bleeds while breaking,  
But thou—thou dost not see.

## 63

I wished the whole tide of my sorrows  
In one single word to convey,  
That so the gay breezes might take it  
And gaily bear it away.

They bore it to thee, belovèd,  
This word compact of woe ;  
Thou hear'st it at every moment,  
Thou hear'st it where'er thou go.

And even at night-time in slumber  
Scarce shut will thine eyelids be,  
Ere into the depths of dreamland  
This word shall follow thee.

## 64

Diamonds hast thou and rubies,  
And all that man wishes for,  
Hast eyes of wondrous beauty—  
My darling, what wilt thou more ?

To those eyes and their beauty  
I have a goodly store  
Of deathless verses indited—  
My darling, what wilt thou more ?

With those eyes and their beauty  
Thou hast tormented me,  
And brought me to utter ruin—  
My darling, what wilt thou more ?

## 65

He who for the first time loves,  
E'en though hapless, is a god ;  
He who for the second time  
Hapless loves—a fool is he.

Such a fool am I, for I love  
Once again without requital.  
Sun, moon, stars, they all are laughing ;  
I am laughing too—and dying.

## 69

'Twas mid July when I forsook you,  
I find you again in January—  
So radiant then in the heat of summer,  
Now cold and frozen utterly.

Once more I depart, once more I come hither,  
And you are neither warm nor cold ;  
I walk o'er the ground where you lie buried,  
And this heart of mine is sad and old.

## 71

In the dark coach we travelled  
Alone the whole long night ;  
We rested our heads on each other,  
And jested with laughter light.

But when day dawned on the morrow,  
My child, how amazed we were !  
For 'twixt us was sitting Cupid,  
That blind young passenger.

## 73

All dim like dreams the houses  
Stand there in a long, long row ;  
As striding by in silence,  
Wrapt in my cloak, I go.

The tower of the cathedral  
Is telling the midnight hour ;  
My love with her charms and her kisses  
Is waiting for me in her bower.

The moon is my companion,  
My way he doth kindly light ;  
Now am I come to her dwelling,  
And cry to him loud in delight :



“ I thank thee, old trusty servant,  
For lighting so well my road ;  
I give thee now thy dismissal,  
Go shine on all others abroad !

“ And if thou shouldst find a lover  
Who weeps alone in his woe,  
Console him, as thou hast consolèd  
Me also long, long ago.”

## 75

On thy white shoulder pillowed,  
My head against thee pressed,  
I overheard the secret  
That all thy heart possessed.

The Blue Hussars with their music  
Come riding to town to-day,  
To-morrow my heart's own darling  
Will leave me and go away.

And what though thou leave me to-morrow ?  
To-day thou belongest to me,  
And when thy fair arms embrace me  
Twice blessèd then shall I be.

## 76

The Blue Hussars with their music  
Are riding out of the town ;  
So I am come back to thee, dearest,  
Bringing a rosy crown.

It was wild work with the soldiers  
And country rabble around !  
And even within thy small heart  
Many their quarters found !

## 78

Hast thou truly come to hate me ?  
Hast thou truly altered quite ?  
All the world shall be my witness  
How I suffered thy despte.

O ye lips, ye lips ungrateful,  
Say, how could you slander so  
Him, who with such deep devotion  
Used to kiss you, long ago ?

## 79

Ah, those eyes again they greet me  
Kindly, as they used to greet,  
And those lips again are speaking,  
Erstwhile made my life so sweet.

And that voice, again I hear it,  
With its well-remembered tone !  
Only I have come back altered,  
Only changed am I alone.

In thy fair white arms encompassed,  
Fondly, lovingly caressed,  
Now I lie upon thy bosom  
Sad, dispirited, depressed.

## 85

Already the hills in the sun are bright,  
The sheep-bells ring from the distant fold ;  
Love, sunshine, lamb, and my heart's delight,  
O would I might thee once more behold !

With eager eye I look up above—  
Farewell, my child, I am leaving thee !  
In vain ! for the curtain does not move ;  
She lies there asleep—and dreams of me ?

## 88

Dark and strange ways am I wending—  
Heart is sick and limbs are sore ;—  
Ah, like balm from heaven descending,  
Sweet moon, doth thy radiance pour !

Sweet moon, thou hast chased and banished  
With thy beams night's spectral fears ;  
All my bitter grief hath vanished,  
And mine eyes are wet with tears.

## 89

'Tis death that is the cool fresh night,  
Life is the hot and sultry day ;  
It darkens ; I am weary,  
Worn out by the garish light.

Over my bed is standing a tree,  
Where sings the love-lorn nightingale,  
And with my dreams there mingles  
The throb of her ecstasy.

## 90

“ Say, where is thy fair love gone,  
Thou didst once so sweetly sing,  
When with wondrous magic flames  
All thy heart was quivering ? ”

Quenched for ever are those flames,  
Cold my heart and sore distressed,  
And this volume is the urn  
Where my love's dead ashes rest.

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Now May is come with all her golden glory,  
Her spicy perfumes and caressing breezes,  
Breathing enchantment from her snow-white  
    blossoms,  
And welcome from a thousand sky-blue violets ;  
And spreading out a green and flowery carpet,  
With sunlight interwove and morning dew,  
She summons her belovèd human children.  
The simple folk obey her earliest call ;  
The men array themselves in nankeen trousers  
And Sunday coats with shiny golden buttons ;  
The women clothe themselves in blameless white ;  
The young men curl their newly-grown  
    moustaches,  
The maidens leave their bosoms unconfined ;  
The poets of the town fill full their pockets  
With paper, pencil, field-glass,—and rejoicing  
They move, a motley crowd, towards the gate,  
And, lying down outside upon the greensward,  
They marvel at the trees so busy growing,  
Play with the pretty flowers so sweet and tender,  
Hearken the music of the merry song-birds,  
And shout aloud to the blue vault of heaven.

And to me too came May. Three times she  
    knocked  
Upon my door, and called me, “ I am May,

Come out, pale dreamer, for I fain would kiss thee."

But I unbolted not my door, and cried :

In vain thou temptest me, unholy stranger.

For I have seen right through thee, seen right through

The world's foundations, yea, have seen too much

And seen too deeply, for all joy hath vanished

And everlasting grief torments my heart.

I see right through the hard and stony coverings

Of human hearts and human habitations,

And see in both deceit and lies and sorrow.

Upon men's faces I can read their counsels,

Many and evil. In the blushing maiden

I see the secret stir of lustful passion ;

And on the proud head of inspired youth

I see the silly, gaily-coloured fool's cap ;

And nought but shapes grotesque and sickly shadows

Upon this earth I see, nor know I whether

It be a madhouse or an hospital.

I see right through the crust of the old earth,

As if it were of glass, and see the horror

That with her cheerful covering of verdure

May strives in vain to hide. I see the dead men,

Who lie beneath, within their narrow coffins,

With folded hands and staring open eyes,

Their vesture white, and white their faces too,

And through their lips the yellow worms are  
crawling.

I see the son in dalliance with his sweetheart  
Choosing to sit upon his father's grave ;  
The nightingales around sing mocking songs,  
The tender meadow-flowers laugh in malice.  
Then the dead father stirs within his grave—  
And ancient Mother Earth in anguish winces.

Ah ! poor old Earth, how well I know thy  
sorrows,

I see the fire that burns within thy bosom,  
And all thy thousand veins, I see, are bleeding ;  
I see how wide thy wound gapes, whence a  
torrent

Of flame and smoke and blood comes wildly  
pouring.

I see the impious giant-children rising,  
Thy brood primeval, from the gulfs of darkness,  
And brandishing on high their fiery torches ;  
They place their iron ladders to the walls  
And wildly storm the fortress of high heaven ;—  
And black dwarfs clamber up, and of a sudden  
All the gold stars dissolve in dust and perish.  
With insolent hands they tear the golden curtain  
From God's own temple ; and with loud lament-  
ing

The holy angel-hosts fall on their faces.

Upon his throne is sitting the pale God,

His crown torn from his head, his hair dishevelled—

And nearer still presses the raging tumult.

The giants fling abroad their fiery torches

Through the wide courts of heaven ; the dwarfs  
with scourges

Made out of flames of fire chastise the angels,—

They writhe contorted, struggling in their torment,

And are dragged hither thither by the hair.

And there I see my own dear guardian angel,

With her sweet countenance and golden tresses,

And everlasting love upon her lips,

And look of saving grace in her blue eyes—

And lo ! a grizzly, hateful, grimy cobbold

Seizes her from the ground, my fair wan angel,

Ogles with leering grin her noble body,

And clasps her helpless in a fond embrace—

Then rings a piercing shriek through all the  
welkin ;

The pillars crumble, earth and heaven together

Collapse, and ancient night resumes her sway.

## RATCLIFF

The god of dreams wafted me to a region

Where weeping willows beckoned me a welcome

With their green tapering branches, and the  
flowers



Looked up at me with sisterly wise eyes,  
Where all familiar sounded the birds' warbling,  
And well-known too the barking of the dogs,  
Where shapes and voices met me with a greeting  
As though I were an old friend—yet where all  
things

Seemed strange to me, wondrous and passing  
strange.

I stood before a small house, trim and rustic ;  
Within my breast a tumult raged, but quiet  
The workings of my brain ; and quietly  
I shook the dust from off my travelled garments ;  
Shrill rang the bell, and open sprang the door.

And there were men and women, well-known  
faces,

In numbers. Over all a trouble brooded,  
A secret voiceless anguish. Strangely moved,  
And as it were in pity, they looked at me,  
So that my very soul within me shuddered  
With boding of some strange calamity.  
Old Margaret at a glance I recognised ;  
A searching look I gave her, yet she spoke not.  
I asked, " Where is Maria ? " but she spoke not.  
Lightly instead she took my hand and led me  
Through a long suite of rooms, all brightly lighted,  
Where pomp and glory reigned and deathly still-  
ness,

Led me at last into a dusky chamber

And pointed with averted countenance  
Towards the figure sitting on the couch.

“Art thou Maria?” I asked, and in my heart  
I was astonished at the steadiness

Wherewith I spoke. And dull as stone, and life-  
less,

A voice replied, “That is the name they call  
me.”

A pang of sudden pain shot through my heart,  
Because that cold and hollow sound was yet  
The voice, once so delightful, of Maria!

That woman in the faded lilac gown,  
Dressed carelessly with slovenly loose bosom,  
Her eyes fixed in a glassy stare, the muscles  
Of her wan cheeks relaxed and leatherlike—

Ah me! that woman was the once so lovely,  
The blooming, charming, beautiful Maria!

“How long you stayed away!” she said aloud  
With cold and strange familiarity,

“You look no longer ailing, dearest friend,  
But strong and well: firm loins and well-set  
calves

Witness your robust health.” A sickly smile  
Flickered about her pale and yellow mouth.

In my bewilderment I blurted out:

“They told me you had married. Is it so?”

“Oh yes,” she said indifferently and laughing,

“I’ve got a wooden stick, covered with leather,  
Who calls himself my husband; but yet wood

Is wood!" She laughed a horrid soundless  
    laugh,  
So that cold agony ran through my soul,  
And doubt seized hold of me:—Can these be  
    really

The chaste, the flower-chaste, lips of my Maria?  
But she rose up, and, snatching hastily  
Her shawl from off the chair, she wrapped  
It round her neck, and clinging to my arm  
She dragged me through the street-door that  
    stood open,  
And dragged me out through field and wood and  
    mead.

The red sun's glowing disk already floated  
Low in the sky; its purple rays illumined  
The tree-tops, and the flowers, and the stream  
Which far away flowed with majestic sweep.

"Do you see, swimming there in the blue  
    water,

That great gold eye?" cried suddenly Maria.

"Be still, poor soul," said I, and I beheld  
A witch-like dance of shadows in the twilight,  
For misty shapes were rising from the meadows,  
Clinging with white soft arms to one another.  
The violets tender looks exchanged; with passion  
The lilies bowed their chalice-heads together;  
The roses all with pure delight were glowing,  
The pinks with fragrance strove the air to kindle;

The flowers all revelled in ambrosial perfumes,  
All wept together silent tears of rapture,  
And all with one song, "Love! love! love!"  
exulted.

The butterflies flew hovering round, the brilliant  
Gold-beetles hummed their delicate fairy-music,  
The evening breezes whispered, the oaks rustled,  
With melting voices sang the nightingales—  
And all amid the whispering, rustling, singing,  
Prattled in tones metallic, cold and hollow,  
The withered woman clinging to my arm :  
" I know thy nightly doings at the castle ;  
That long-legged shadow is a simpleton.  
He nods and waves at everything one does.  
The blue-coat is an angel, but the red-coat  
With the drawn sword—he is your bitter foe."  
And making still more whimsical strange speeches  
Incessantly she prattled, till exhausted  
She sank beside me on the mossy bank,  
Which underneath the aged oak-tree lies.

There, close together, sat we sad and silent,  
Gazed at each other and grew ever sadder.  
With sighs like dying groans the oak-tree  
rustled,  
Deep-sorrowing sang the nightingale above.  
Then red lights, through the leafage penetrating,  
Flickered around Maria's wan white features,  
And woke a sparkle in her staring eyeballs,

And, speaking in her old sweet voice, she asked  
me :

“How didst thou know I was so miserable ?  
In thy wild songs I lately read my story.”

Then froze my heart within me, struck with  
horror

At thought of my own madness, which the future  
Had thus foreseen ; a shudder passed through my  
brain,

And overwhelmed with terror I awoke.

### DONNA CLARA

In the twilight garden paces  
To and fro the judge's daughter,  
Merry din of drum and trumpet  
Sounds below from out the castle.

“I am weary now of dances,  
Weary of the honied speeches,  
And the knights whose pretty phrases  
Match my beauty with the sunshine.

“Wearisome to me are all things,  
Since the hour when in the moonlight  
I beheld that knight, whose lute-strings  
Lured me yestreen to the window.

“Standing there so slim and radiant,  
While his eyes shot lightning-flashes  
O’er his pale and noble features,  
He St George himself resembled.”

Thus was musing Donna Clara,  
And her eyes were looking downward ;  
Raising them, she sees the handsome  
Stranger knight before her standing.

Hand in hand, with lovers’ whispers,  
They go wandering in the moonlight ;  
Zephyrs breathe their soft caresses,  
Roses give them faery greetings.

Roses give them faery greetings,  
All aglow like love’s apostles.—  
“Nay, but tell me, dearest maiden,  
Why so suddenly thou blushest ? ”

“ ’Tis the midges, love, that sting me,  
And in summer-time the midges  
I detest as much as hateful  
Swarms of Jews with great big noses.”

“Never mind the Jews and midges,”  
Quoth the knight in playful protest ;  
From the almond-trees are falling  
Showers of blossoms soft as snow-flakes.

Showers of blossoms soft as snow-flakes  
Spill on every side their fragrance.—  
“Nay, but tell me, dearest maiden,  
Is thy heart mine altogether?”

“Yea, my love, I dearly love thee,  
And I swear it by the Saviour  
Whom the Jews by God accursèd  
Used so spitefully and murdered.”

“Never mind the Jews and Saviour,”  
Quoth the knight in playful protest.  
In the distance sway the dream-like  
Snow-white lilies, light-encinctured.

Snow-white lilies, light-encinctured  
To the starry heavens look upward.—  
“Nay, but tell me, dearest maiden,  
Hast thou never once sworn falsely?”

“Nought, know I, my love, of falsehood,  
For of all the blood within me  
Not a drop is that of Moors  
Or the dirty Jewish people.”

“Never mind the Jews and Moors,”  
Quoth the knight in playful protest;  
And he leads the judge's daughter  
To a shadowy myrtle-bower.

In the toils of love so tender  
He hath secretly enmeshed her !  
Short their words, and long their kisses,  
And their hearts are overflowing.

Bridal anthem, sweet and melting,  
Chants the nightingale, fair songstress ;  
From the earth to lead the torch-dance  
Tripping come the little glow-worms.

In the bower it waxes stiller,  
Nought is heard but stealthy noises,  
Rustlings of the busy myrtle,  
Deep-drawn breathings of the flowers.

Of a sudden from the castle,  
Bursts the sound of drum and trumpet,  
And, aroused from slumber, Clara  
Leaps up from her knight's embraces.

"Hark ! they call me now, belovèd,  
Yet, before we sever, surely  
Thy dear name thou needs must tell me  
That so long thou hast kept hidden."

And the knight, serenely smiling,  
Kissed the fingers of his mistress,  
Kissed her lips and kissed her forehead,  
And at last he tells her, saying :



“ I, thy chosen lover, lady,  
Am the son of that all-famous  
Rabbi, learned in the Scriptures,  
Israel of Saragossa.”

## ALMANSOR

### I

In the great church of Cordóva  
There are pillars thirteen hundred,  
Thirteen hundred giant pillars  
The colossal dome sustaining.

And on dome and walls and pillars  
Run the texts from top to bottom,  
The Korán's Arabian scriptures,  
Cunningly like flowers inwoven.

Moorish kings in days departed  
Built this house to Allah's glory,  
But great changes have befallen  
In time's dark and ceaseless welter.

On the tower, where once the warder  
Stood and called to prayer the people,  
Now 'tis Christian bells are ringing  
With their melancholy clatter.

On the steps, where once the faithful  
Sang the gospel of the prophet,  
Now the tonsured priests are showing  
The stale magic of their masses.

And what press there is and crowding  
Round the gaily-painted puppets,  
What a hum and smoke and tinkle,  
What a flare of silly tapers.

In the great church of Cordóva  
Stands Almanson ben Abdullah,  
Watching quietly the pillars,  
Murmuring in quiet whisper :

“ O ye pillars, strong, gigantic,  
Carven once for Allah’s glory,  
Now ye needs must serve and honour  
Christendom’s abhorred religion !

“ Ye submit to time’s compulsion,  
Patiently ye bear your burden ;  
Ay, for truly to the weaker  
Easier far becomes submission.”

Then his head with mien contented  
Bows Almanson ben Abdullah  
O’er the carved baptismal basin  
In the great church of Cordóva.

## 2

From the great church strode he quickly ;  
Rode forth on his wild black charger ;  
In the wind his wet hair floated  
And the feathers of his helmet.

On the road to Alkoléa  
By the shore of Guadalquivir,  
Where there blooms the snow-white almond  
And the scented golden orange.

There the merry knight a-riding  
Pipes and sings with careless laughter,  
Matching music with the songbirds  
And the loud voice of the water.

In the castle Alkoléa  
Dwelleth Clara of Alvares,  
In Navarre her sire is fighting,  
So she hath a wider freedom.

And Almansor in the distance  
Hears the sound of drums and trumpets,  
Sees afar the castle's torches  
Gleaming through the forest shadows.

In the castle Alkoléa  
Dance twelve gaily 'tired ladies,  
Dance twelve gaily 'tired knights, and  
Dances, best of all, Almansor.

On the wings of sprightly humour  
He goes flitting round the ballroom,  
And contrives to all the ladies  
Honied compliments to murmur.

First he kisses Isabella's  
Lovely hands ; then turning quickly  
Stands before Elvira, looking  
In her face with merry glances.

Smiling asks of Leonora :  
If to-day he is in favour ?  
And to each he shows the gold cross  
Which is fastened to his mantle.

He protests to every lady :  
That his heart is hers, hers only ;  
Thirty times this evening swearing :  
" On my oath as I'm a Christian ! "

## 3

In the castle Alkoléa  
Silent are the sounds of pleasure,  
Lords and ladies all have vanished,  
And the lights are all extinguished.

Lady Clara and Almansor  
Linger lonely in the ballroom ;  
One last solitary candle  
Casts o'er both its pallid glimmer.

On the sofa sits the lady,  
While the knight sits on the footstool,  
And his sleepy head is lying  
On the knees of his beloved.

Rose-oil from a golden phial  
Pours the lady, deeply musing,  
On the brown locks of Almansor—  
And from his heart's depth he sigheth.

Kisses sweet, with lips of velvet,  
Prints the lady, deeply musing,  
On the brown locks of Almansor—  
And his brow grows overclouded.

Floods of tears from eyes that glisten  
Weeps the lady, deeply musing,  
On the brown locks of Almansor—  
And his lips begin to tremble.

And he dreams : he still is standing,  
With his head bowed down and dripping,  
In the great church of Cordóva,  
And he hears hushed voices speaking :

Hears the mighty giant pillars  
Muttering all grim, resentful,  
That no longer will they bear it,  
And they totter and they stagger ;—

And they fiercely break in pieces—  
Pale as death turn priests and people,  
With great crash the dome collapses,  
And the Christian gods flee wailing.

## THE PILGRIMAGE TO KEVLAAR

### I

The mother stood at the window,  
The son on his sick-bed lay.  
“ Rise, Wilhelm, to see the procession ;  
The pilgrims pass this way.”

“ I am so ailing, mother,  
I cannot hear nor see ;  
I think on my dead love Gretchen,  
And my heart aches wearily.”

“ Rise, take thy book and rosary,  
To Kevlaar we will go,  
For there, I wis, God’s Mother  
Will heal thy sick heart’s woe.”

Waving the holy banners,  
Singing the holy song,  
All through Cologne in Rhine-land  
Marches the pilgrim throng.

The mother follows the pilgrims,  
Leading her son ; they raise  
Their voices, singing in chorus :  
“ Mary, to thee be praise.”

## 2

The Mother of God at Kevlaar  
Is wearing her finest gown ;  
To-day she is not idle—  
The sick folk throng the town.

To her come all the sick folk,  
Each with an offering,  
Limbs wrought from wax—full many  
Wax feet and hands they bring.

And he who a wax hand offers,  
His hand is whole again ;  
And he who a wax foot offers,  
His foot is healed of pain.

To Kevlaar came many on crutches  
Who now on the tight-rope bound ;  
Full many play now on the fiddle  
Who had not a finger sound.

The mother took a wax light,  
And out of it fashioned a heart.  
“ Take this,” she said, “ to God’s Mother,  
And she will heal thy smart.”

The son took the wax heart sighing,  
And sighing went to the shrine ;  
The words from his heart came welling  
The tears welled forth from his eyne :

“ Oh thou that art highly favoured,  
God’s handmaid, free from stain.  
To thee, O Queen of heaven,  
I pour forth all my pain.

“ I dwelt erstwhile with my mother  
In fair Cologne citie,  
That town where many hundred  
Churches and chapels be.

“ And near to us dwelt Gretchen,  
But Gretchen is no more.  
Mary, I bring thee a wax heart—  
My wounded heart restore.

“ Heal my sick heart, and early  
And late my voice I’ll raise,  
Singing with grateful fervour :  
Mary, to thee be praise.”

## 3

The ailing son and the mother  
In their little chamber slept,  
When the Mother of God right gently  
Into the chamber step.



She bowed down over the sufferer,  
Right gently her hand did lay  
Upon his heart, and sweetly  
She smiled, and she passed away.

The mother sees all while dreaming,  
And more had she seen and marked ;  
But lo, she awoke from her slumber,  
The dogs so loudly barked.

There lay, with limbs all rigid,  
Her son—and he was dead ;  
And over his wan cheek glimmered  
The light of the morning red.

The mother her hands she folded,  
And, full of a strange amaze,  
She sang with meek devotion,  
“ Mary, to thee be praise.”

## THE HARZ JOURNEY (1824)

### PROLOGUE

Coats of black and silken stockings,  
Courtly ruffles white as snow,  
Soft discourse and friendly greetings—  
If there were but hearts below !

Hearts to beat within those bosoms,  
Hearts to love, and hearts to melt !—  
I am sick of all your ballads  
Feigning woes you never felt !

I will hie me to the mountains,  
Where the peaceful châteaux be,  
Where the lungs can breathe unstified,  
Where the winds are blowing free.

I will hie me to the mountains,  
Where the dark pine-forests lie,  
Where birds sing and streamlets whisper,  
Where the clouds sweep proudly by.

Fare ye well, ye polished salons,  
Sirs and Madams, polished too !  
I will hie me to the mountains,  
And look down and laugh at you !

#### ON THE HARDENBERG

Rise again, ye dreams forgotten !  
Heart, uncloseth thy secret door !  
Song's delights and tears of sorrow  
In one stream united pour.

I will wander through the pine-woods,  
Where the babbling fountain springs,  
Where the lordly stags are roaming,  
Where the lovely throstle sings.

I will hie me to the mountains,  
To the rugged rocky land,  
Where the grey old castle-ruins  
In the light of morning stand.

There I'll sit me down and ponder  
On the old days past and dead,  
On the prime of vanished peoples,  
On the glories that have fled.

Now the jousting-lists are grass-grown,  
Where fought once the doughty knight,  
Who, the strongest overcoming,  
Won the trophy of the fight.

O'er the balcony climbs ivy,  
Where stood once the lovely dame,  
Who the mighty overcomer  
With her bright eyes overcame.

Conquering lord and conquering lady—  
Both has death's hand conquered now—  
That lean knight with scythe on shoulder  
In the dust lays all men low.

## MOUNTAIN IDYLLS

## I

On the mountain stands the cottage  
Where the aged miner dwells ;  
There the green fir creaks, and moonlight,  
Gleaming golden, floods the fells.

In the cottage stands an arm-chair,  
Carved with wondrous subtlety ;  
He who sits in it is happy,  
And that happy man am I.

Near my knees, upon the footstool,  
Sits the child, and leans her head ;  
Eyes like two blue stars of heaven,  
Sweet mouth like a rosebud red.

And the dear blue stars of heaven  
From divine depths on me gaze ;  
While her lily finger slyly  
On her rosebud mouth she lays.

No, the mother does not see us,  
Busily she spins her thrums,  
And the father plays his zither,  
While the old, old tunes he hums.

And the child is whispering softly,  
Softly, with a gentle purr ;  
Many a secret of importance  
Has she trusted to my ear.

“ Since our aunt died, all is altered,  
Never go we nowadays  
To the shooting club at Goslar,  
That was just a splendid place.

“ But up here 'tis very lonesome,  
From the hills the wild winds blow,  
And in winter we seem buried  
Altogether in the snow.

“ And I'm such a timid maiden,  
Trembling like a child with fright  
At the wicked mountain spirits,  
Who bestir themselves at night.”

Suddenly the dear child pauses,  
By her own words terrified,  
Both her little hands she raises  
To her face her eyes to hide.

Outdoors louder creak the fir-trees,  
And the wheel goes whirring round.  
And the old, old tune is humming  
Always to the zither's sound.

“Darling child, be not affrighted  
At the wicked spirits’ might !  
Round thee stand the guardian angels  
Keeping watch by day and night.”

## 2

At the window low the fir-tree  
Gently taps with fingers green ;  
And the moon, the silent listener,  
Floods the room with golden sheen.

Father, mother, snoring lightly,  
In the next room lie asleep ;  
But we two with blissful prattle  
Wide awake each other keep.

“That thou sayest thy prayers too often,  
This to think I hardly dare,  
For that curl of lip disdainful  
Surely does not come from prayer.

“Those cold wicked lips affright me,  
Every time I see them sneer,  
But that gleam of holy rapture  
In thine eyes destroys my fear.

“Yet I doubt if thou believest  
That belief which matters most—  
The belief in God the Father,  
In the Son and Holy Ghost.”

Ah, my child, when in my boyhood  
At my mother's knee I stood,  
I believed in God the Father,  
Lord of Heaven, great and good !

Who the earth so fair created  
And the men so fair thereon,  
Who of old ordained the courses  
For sun, moon, and stars to run.

Little one, as I grew bigger,  
Greater scope my vision won,  
I grew strong in sense and wisdom,  
And believed then in the Son ;

That dear Son, whose love exceeding  
Showed us true love glorified ;  
Yet, love's usual wage receiving,  
By man's hands was crucified.

Now that I have grown up, travelled,  
And can much book-learning boast,  
I believe with heart o'erflowing  
Also in the Holy Ghost.

He has wrought the greatest marvels,  
And yet greater will he do ;  
He destroyed the tyrant's stronghold,  
And the slave's chain broke in two.

He the ancient wounds assuages,  
Ancient rights makes new again ;  
All mankind by birth belonging  
To one race of noble strain.

He disperses the bad vapours,  
Chases the dark thoughts away,  
Which have spoilt all love and pleasure,  
Grinning at us night and day.

Knights by thousands in bright armour  
Has the Holy Ghost inspired  
To fulfil his secret purpose ;  
And their hearts with courage fired.

Lo ! their trusty swords are flashing,  
Lo ! their goodly banners wave !  
O ! my child, wouldst thou not gladly  
See this host of knights so brave ?

Come then, kiss me, child, and boldly  
Look at me, for in that host  
I too am a knight-crusader,  
Fighting for the Holy Ghost.

## 3

Out of doors behind the green fir  
Sinks the moon, and all grows dark,  
While our lamp within burns faintly,  
Giving but a feeble spark.



But my two blue stars are shining  
Through the dark with brilliant rays,  
And the roses red are glowing,  
And the dear child speaks, and says—

“ Little people, fairy-goblins,  
Steal our bacon and our bread,  
Safe at night within the cupboard,  
In the morning it has fled !

“ Little people skim the cream off  
From our milk, and as a jest  
Leave the cans without their covers,  
And the cat drinks all the rest.

“ And the cat’s a witch, who, prowling  
Through the storm at midnight hour,  
Yonder on the haunted mountain,  
Creeps up to the ruined tower.

“ There a castle once was standing,  
Love rained smiles, and weapons glanced,  
Gay knights, ladies and their pages,  
Swung bright torches as they danced.

“ People, castle, all were blasted  
By a sorceress unblest ;  
Nothing now remains but ruins,  
Where the screech-owl builds her nest.

“But my dear aunt used to tell us :

    If the proper word one says,  
At the proper hour of night-time,  
    Yonder at the proper place,

“Then the ruins are transmuted

    Once more to a castle bright ;  
Knights and ladies, and their pages  
    Dance once more with footing light ;

“And who says the word—he owneth

    Castle, people, everything ;  
Drums and trumpets speak their homage,  
    His young lordship honouring.”

Thus upon her mouth’s red rose-tree

    Fairy stories blossomed bright,  
While her eyes, above it shining,  
    Shed their blue and starry light.

And the child, her gold hair twining

    Round my hands at her sweet will,  
Gives my fingers pretty nicknames,  
    Laughs and kisses,—then is still.

All things in the quiet chamber

    Seem familiar forms to show ;  
Table, cupboard, all, meseemeth,  
    I have seen long, long ago.

Grave and friendly ticks the time-piece,  
Of itself the zither seems,  
Hardly audible, to tinkle,  
And I sit like one in dreams.

Now the proper hour is striking,  
And the proper place is this ;  
Yea, and from my lips escaping,  
Steals the proper word, I wis.

Seest thou, maiden, how the midnight  
Trembles and to twilight breaks !  
Louder sound the stream and pine-trees,  
And the hoary mountain wakes.

Song of dwarf and sound of zither  
Echo from the mountain's womb,  
And there springs a flower-wood, bursting,  
As in some mad spring, to bloom ;

Flowers, bold staring magic flowers,  
Leaves miraculously broad,  
Fragrant, garish, straining headlong,  
As if stirred by passion's goad.

Roses wild, like red flames burning,  
Sparkling from the crowd arise ;  
Lilies, like crystalline columns,  
Shoot right upward to the skies.

And the stars, like suns enormous,  
Look down with a yearning glow ;  
And the giant cups of lilies  
With their radiance overflow.

But, dear child, above all others,  
We ourselves transfigured are ;  
Gold and silk and gleam of torchlight  
Flash around us everywhere.

Thou the princess art, this cottage  
Is the castle, where in glee  
Knights and ladies and their pages  
Dance and keep high jubilee.

And 'tis I, 'tis I have won thee,  
Castle, people, everything ;  
Drums and trumpets speak their homage,  
My young lordship honouring.

#### THE SHEPHERD BOY

King-like is the shepherd laddie,  
For his throne the grassy down ;  
While the sun above him shining  
Is his great and golden crown.

At his feet the sheep are lying,  
Red-crossed minions of the state ;  
And his knighthood are the bull-calves  
Strutting with their pompous gait.

And the kids are his court-players ;  
And the song-birds and the kine  
Furnish all his chamber-music  
With their bells and flutings fine.

And the singing and the ringing  
Such delightful concert keep  
With the waterfall and pine-trees  
That the king falls fast asleep.

While he sleeps, his place is taken  
By his minister, the hound,  
Who with deep and sullen baying  
Makes the welkin ring around.

Sleepily the young king murmurs,  
" Ruling is but grief and pain ;  
O that with my queen and sweetheart  
I were safely home again !

" There my royal head so softly  
On my fair queen's bosom lies,  
And my empire stretches boundless  
In the blue depths of her eyes ! "

#### ON THE BROCKEN

Now at length the east is brightening  
With the sun's faint early rays,  
Far and wide the mountain summits  
Float above the sea of haze.

Had I seven-leagued boots, how swiftly  
Would I cross those mountain-fells,  
Striding with the speed of whirlwind  
Thither where the dear child dwells.

Lightly would I raise the curtains  
Hanging round her little bed,  
Lightly kiss her on the forehead,  
Lightly on her lips so red.

Yet more lightly should my whisper  
Those small ears like lilies fill :  
“ Dream that we have never parted,  
Dream that we are lovers still.”

ILSE

I am the Princess Ilse,  
In Ilsenstein I dwell ;  
Come with me to my castle,  
There shall we fare right well.

Thy head will I besprinkle  
With limpid waters bright,  
And thou shalt forget thy sorrows,  
Thou sick and weary wight.

In my white arms encompassed,  
Pressed to my bosom white,  
There shalt thou lie a-dreaming  
Of faery-land delight.

I'll fondle thee with kisses,  
As once in days long fled  
I fondled good Kaiser Heinrich,  
Who now is with the dead.

The dead are dead for ever,  
And life is the living man's part ;  
See ! I am fair and radiant,  
And laughter stirs in my heart.

Come down into my castle,  
My crystal castle, and see  
How damsels and knights are dancing,  
And pages shout with glee ;

List how the silk trains rustle,  
Spurs clink with a merry din,  
Dwarfs play on the drum and the trumpet,  
The horn and the violin.

But thou shalt lie pressed to my bosom,  
As once Kaiser Heinrich would do ;—  
His ears I used to seal up  
Whenever the trumpet blew.

## THE NORTH SEA (1825-1826)

## FIRST CYCLE

## 3

## SUNSET

The glowing ruddy sun descends  
Into the widespread all-beholding  
Grey and silver ocean ;  
Airy shapes of vapour, rosy-hued,  
Attend his setting ; and opposite,  
From dusky veils of clouds autumnal,  
A death-pale face of sorrow,  
Breaks forth the moon.  
And, sparks of light, behind her  
Mistily glimmer the stars.

Once in heaven there shone,  
In wedded honour,  
Moon the goddess, and Sun the god,  
And round about them there clustered the stars,  
Their little innocent children.

But evil tongues came whispering discord,  
And they parted in anger,  
That bright and noble pair.

Now by day, in lonely splendour,  
Through the empyrean marches the sun-god,



For his excellent glory  
Hymned and worshipped far and wide  
By prosperous, proud, hard-hearted men.  
But by night  
The moon wanders through heaven,  
The hapless mother,  
With all her orphaned starry children.  
And she shines in silent sorrow,  
And amorous maidens and melting poets  
Bring her their tears and their songs.

The tender moon ! in her woman's heart  
She still is in love with her radiant lord.  
At eventide, trembling and pale,  
Listening she leans from a fleecy cloud,  
And gazes sadly as he departeth,  
And fain in her anguish would cry to him " Come,  
Come, your children are longing for thee—"   
But the stubborn sun-god,  
Beholding his wife, redoubles  
His purple glory  
Of wrath and grief,  
And inexorable he hastens down  
To his cold and watery widowed bed.

Evil whispering tongues  
Have thus brought pain and ruin  
Even to the immortal gods.  
And the hapless gods, up there in the heaven

In comfortless anguish  
Move through their endless orbits,  
And, powerless to die,  
Drag with them for ever  
Their shining misery.

But I, the mortal,  
In birth so lowly, in death so blessed,—  
My sorrow endures not.

## THE NORTH SEA

### SECOND CYCLE

#### 7

#### QUESTIONS

Beside the sea, the desolate sea,  
Stands by night a youth,  
With sorrow burdened, with doubt tormented,  
And in mournful accents the waves he questions :

“ O rede me the riddle of life,  
The dreadful primeval riddle,  
Whereon many heads already have brooded,  
Heads on whose caps were hieroglyphics,  
Heads wearing turbans and black birettas,  
Bewiggèd heads and a thousand other  
Pitiful aching human heads—

Tell me, what is the meaning of man ?  
From whence has he come ? and whither goes he ?  
Who dwells up there in the golden stars ? ”

The waves they murmur their murmur eternal,  
The wind it bloweth, the clouds speed onward,  
The stars they glitter, indifferent and cold,  
And a fool waits for an answer.

## NEW POEMS

NEW SPRING (1828-1831)

7

THE butterfly is in love with the rose,  
And ever keeps hovering by,  
The sunbeam with soft golden kiss  
Keeps hovering round the butterfly.

But ah ! I would, I would that I knew  
With what the rose is in love.  
Is it the singing of Philomel ?  
Is it Eve's silent star above ?

I know not with what the rose is in love  
But I love all of you well :  
Rose and sunbeam and butterfly,  
Eve's star and Philomel.

13

The azure eyes of spring  
Peep from the grass beneath ;  
They are the darling violets  
I weave into a wreath.

I think the while I pluck them,  
And all my thoughts and sighs  
The nightingale o'erhearing  
Turns to melodious cries.

Yes, all my thoughts she utters  
With loud triumphant shout ;  
My deepest, tenderest secret  
Is known the wood throughout.

## 15

The graceful water-lily  
Looks dreamily up from the lake ;  
The moon smiles down to greet her,  
Love-lorn for her dear sake.

Coyly her head she buries  
Again beneath the wave—  
And lo ! at her feet she sees him,  
Her lover so pale and grave.

## 18

With azure eyes thou gazest  
On me so lovingly ;  
I am bewitched and speechless,  
For thou hast spellbound me.

Always where'er I wander  
I muse on thine azure eyes,  
And azure are the musings  
That in my heart arise.

## 23

Like as the moon's mirrored image  
Trembles in the wandering wave,  
While the moon herself through heaven  
Moves with tranquil step and grave ;

So, beloved, thou art moving,  
Gravely, tranquilly apart,  
'Tis thine image only trembles,  
Mirrored in my quivering heart.

## 29

There was an aged monarch,  
Heavy his heart and grey his head ;  
The poor forlorn old monarch  
A youthful maid did wed.

There was a handsome page-boy,  
Golden his hair and light his mind ;  
He was the young queen's squire,  
And bore her train behind.

Know'st thou the old, old ballad ?  
So honey-sweet, so sad with fate ?  
Both page and queen must perish,  
Because of their love too great.

SERAPHINE (1832-1839)

I

Through the wood, the dreaming pine-wood,  
As I walk at eventide,  
Hovering ever close beside me  
Doth thy gentle figure glide.

Is that not thy gleaming raiment ?  
Thy soft countenance that shines ?  
Or is it the moonlight only  
Breaks the darkness of the pines ?

Are those tears of my own shedding,  
Lightly falling, that I hear ?  
Or is't thou indeed that weapest,  
Dearest, as thou walkest near ?

2

O'er the silence of the seashore  
Now are fallen the shades of night ;  
From the clouds there steals a moonbeam,  
From the waves a whisper light ;

“That poor wight there—is he witless ?  
Or with love has he gone mad ?  
For he looks so sad and gladsome,  
Gladsome and yet also sad.”

Then the moon looks down and smiling  
Speaks in tones that softly flute ;  
“Mad with love and witless also  
Is he—and a poet to boot.”

## 3

There goes a white gull wheeling  
Above ; I watch her fly  
Right over the darkling billows ;  
The moon rides high in the sky.

The dog-fish and the ray-fish  
From out the sea leap high,  
The sea-gull is soaring and sinking,  
The moon rides high in the sky.

O dear and unresting spirit,  
How doleful is thy cry,  
Too near thee is the water.  
The moon rides high in the sky.



## 4

Bright in the moon the waters rest,  
Softly the billows fall ;  
My heart is heavy and oppressed,  
The old song I recall ;

The old, old song whose burden tells  
Of the lost cities, where  
From out the ocean-depths upwells  
The sound of bells and prayer.

That sound of bells and prayer, I ween,  
Those cities will not save ;  
For that which once has buried been  
Returns not from the grave.

## 5

Thou lovedst me and I knew it,  
I knew it long ago ;  
Yet when thou didst confess it  
It struck me like a blow.

I went up on the hillside,  
I sang for joy, I leapt ;  
I went down to the sea-shore,  
And, as the sun set, wept.

My heart is like the sun's orb  
That flames of fire surround ;  
So large, so fair, it sinketh  
And in love's sea is drowned.

## 6

With curious eye the sea-gull  
Looked down upon us here,  
As I so close was pressing  
Upon thy lips mine ear.

Fain would it know what sweetness  
It was thy mouth distilled,  
Whether my ear with kisses  
Or whispered words were filled.

Would I myself could fathom  
What hidden within me lies !  
For there the words and kisses  
Have mingled in strange wise.

## 7

She fled before me like a doe,  
So shyly and so swift ;  
She clambered up from crag to crag,  
Her hair the winds uplift.

Where the hill sloped towards the sea,  
There did I overtake her ;  
And, soft words melting her hard heart,  
To pity did awake her.

There did we sit high under heaven  
And like the heaven blest.  
In the dark sea far, far below,  
The sun it sank to rest.

In the dark sea far, far below,  
Was quenched the fair sun's light ;  
The clouds swept by above our heads  
In stormy joyous flight.

O do not weep ! Beneath the waves  
The sun doth not lie dead.  
But in my heart with all his flames,  
Has hidden awhile his head.

## 8

The Church of the Third Testament—  
Its latest consecration—  
Upon this rock we dedicate ;  
Suffering's annihilation.

The conflict that befooled us long  
'Twixt body and soul is mended ;  
The silly torture of the flesh  
Has now at long last ended.

Hear'st thou not God in the dark sea  
With thousand voices speaking ?  
And see'st thou not above our heads  
God's thousand lights outbreking ?

The holy God, He dwells in light  
And in night's dark recesses ;  
Since God is everything that is,  
He must be in our kisses.

## 9

O'er the sea grey night is brooding,  
Little stars gleam in the skies.  
Sometimes from amid the waters  
Deep and long-drawn notes arise.

'Tis the old north wind at play there,  
Sweeping the white billows o'er ;  
And like organ-pipes they tremble,  
And like organ-pipes they roar.

Pagan partly, partly Christian,  
Sounds the music of their voice,  
Rising joyfully to heaven,  
Making all the stars rejoice.

And the stars grow ever larger,  
In their orbits glowing bright,  
Till as large as suns they cluster  
All around the heaven's height.

To the music heard below them  
Mad and wild the chant they sing,  
Like sun-nightingales that brightly  
Overhead their passage wing.

In one loud and mighty anthem  
Sea and sky together merge,  
And great storms of joyful passion  
Wildly through my bosom surge.

## 10

Phantom love and phantom kisses,  
Phantom life so sweet, so strange,  
Deem'st thou, silly child, such blisses  
Last for ever without change ?

All the joy the soul possesses  
Like an empty dream departs ;  
Sleep at last our eyelids presses,  
And forgetfulness our hearts.

## 11

On the sea-shore the maiden  
Stood sighing bitterly ;  
Her heart with grief was laden  
The setting sun to see.

O maiden, cease your fretting,  
This trick is old, you'll find ;  
Before us he is setting  
But rises again behind.

## 12

With black sails rigged my shallop sails  
Far over the stormy sea ;  
Thou knowest how bitter-sad I am,  
And yet thou spurnest me.

Hither and thither like the wind  
Thy heart shifts faithlessly ;  
With black sails rigged my shallop sails  
Far over the stormy sea.

## 13

How shameful was thy conduct—  
I have from mankind concealed it,  
But sailing out over the sea,  
I have to the fishes revealed it.

On dry land only I let thee  
Possess an honest name ;  
Over the whole wide ocean  
They know thy tale of shame.

## 14

The waves in their fury lashing  
Burst on the land,  
And dashing and crashing  
Rush o'er the sand.

They roll in, huge, gigantic,  
With ceaseless fall,  
Ever they wax more frantic—  
What boots it all ?

## 15

The Runic stone in the sea stands high,  
And there I sit and ponder.  
The wind moans wild, the sea-gulls cry,  
The billows welter and wander.

I've loved full many a lovely child  
And many good kindly fellows—  
Where are they gone ? the wind moans wild,  
And wander and welter the billows.

## 16

The sea like gold beneath the sun  
Is sparkling brilliantly.  
When I am dead, my brothers,  
Bury me in the sea.

For always the sea has been my joy,  
So oft its gentle swell  
Has cooled my fiery spirit ;  
We loved each other well.



# ROMANCERO

1846-1851

HISTORIES

## THE BATTLEFIELD OF HASTINGS

DEEPLY the Abbot of Waltham sighed  
To hear the tale of woe,  
How Harold the king on Hastings' field  
Was grievously laid low.

Two monks, Asgod and Ailrik hight,  
To Hastings he sent straightway,  
To search among the dead and find  
Where Harold's body lay.

Sadly the monks went forth to seek  
And sadly returnèd they :  
" O reverend father, the world goes ill,  
Our luck has melted away.

" The better man has fallen ; the fight  
Is won by a bastard and knave ;  
And robbers in armour divide the land  
And make the freeman a slave.

“ Normandy’s meanest scoundrel now  
Doth lordship in Britain hold.  
We saw a tailor from Bayeux who rode  
On horseback with spurs of gold.

“ Now woe betide all Saxon folk !  
Ye Saxon saints, who dwell  
In heaven above, take heed lest shame  
Fall not upon you as well.

“ We know now what the great comet meant  
That all through this year did ride  
Blood-red across the sky at night,  
A fiery broomstick astride.

“ At Hastings was that ill star’s bane  
To its fulfilment brought ;  
We reached the battlefield and there  
Amidst the corpses sought.

“ We sought him here, we sought him there,  
Till all our hopes gave way—  
Not anywhere could we find the place  
Where dead King Harold lay.”

In such wise Asgod and Ailrik spoke ;  
The abbot his hands he wrung ;  
He sank in deepest thought awhile,  
Then sighing at length gave tongue :

“ By Grendelfield in Bardenstein  
Lies a deep forest dell ;  
There in a lowly humble cot  
Doth Edith Swan-neck dwell.

“ They call her Edith Swan-neck for  
Like a swan’s neck her throat ;  
Harold the King, when she was young,  
Used on her charms to dote.

“ He loved and fondled and kissed her awhile,  
Then went, and remembered not.  
Time passes away ; full sixteen years  
Have passed since the King forgot.

“ Go, brothers, find this woman quick,  
And bid her with you return  
To Hastings, for there the woman’s eye  
Will surely the King discern.

“ Then must you hither to Waltham Abbey  
Make haste the corpse to bring ;  
We’ll bury the body with Christian rites  
And for the soul we’ll sing.”

At midnight to the woodland cot  
The messengers took their way ;

“ Come, wake and follow us, Edith Swan-neck,  
And make no long delay.

“The Duke of Normandy has won  
A mighty victory,  
And on the field of Hastings slain  
King Harold now doth lie.

“Come then to Hastings, for there we seek  
His body among the dead,  
That we may bring it to Waltham Abbey,  
For thus the Abbot said.”

No word did Edith Swan-neck speak,  
She dressed herself right fast,  
And followed the monks ; her grizzled hair  
Flew wild in the winter blast.

Poor woman, she trod with naked feet  
Through swamp and bramble stiff,  
Till at the break of day they came  
To Hastings' chalky cliff.

The mist that covered the battlefield  
As with a wet white cloak  
Slowly dispersed, and the crows flew up,  
And horrible was their croak.

Full many thousand corpses lay  
There on the bloodstained ground,  
Piteous to see, stripped naked and maimed ;  
With mangled horses around.

And Edith Swan-neck, through the blood,  
Waded with feet all bare,  
And shooting like arrows their glances round.  
Her searching eyes did stare.

She sought him here, she sought him there ;  
The greedy birds of death  
Oft-times she scared away ; the monks  
Toiled after her scant of breath.

She sought and sought the whole live day.  
'Twas evening when suddenly  
There burst from the poor old woman's breast  
A shrill and eldritch cry.

Edith Swan-neck the dead King's corpse  
At last has chanced upon.  
She spake no word, she wept no tear,  
She kissed the features wan.

She kissed the brow, she kissed the mouth,  
His body she embraced,  
She kissed the wounds on the King's breast  
With frozen blood enlaced.

Upon his shoulder, too, she saw,  
And as she saw caressed,  
Three little marks that once her teeth  
Had in love's play impressed.

The monks the while the stems of trees  
Were hewing and hammering,  
To make thereout a bier whereon  
To carry the dead King.

To Waltham Abbey the corpse they bore  
To give it burial there ;  
And Edith Swan-neck followed behind  
The body of her fere.

She sang in innocent childlike wise  
The litany of the dead.  
Weirdly it echoed through the night,  
While the monks softly prayed.

### THE ASRA

Every day the sultan's daughter,  
Wondrous beautiful, was pacing  
In the evening by the fountain,  
Where the waters wan were bubbling.

Every day there stood the slave-boy  
In the evening by the fountain,  
Where the waters wan were bubbling ;  
Every day his face grew paler.

And one evening, lo ! the princess  
Burst on him with sudden challenge ;  
" I would fain know what thy name is,  
What thy country, what thy kindred."

And the slave-boy said, "They call me  
Mahommed ; I come from Yema ;  
And my tribesmen are the Asra,  
They who when they love must perish."

## THE POET FIRDUSI

### I

Men of gold or men of silver !  
If a churl speaks of a florin,  
He refers to silver only,  
And he means a silver florin.

But in speech of prince, or emperor,  
Must a florin needs be always  
Golden ; only golden florins  
Would an emperor take or give.

So think all good honest people,  
And so also thought Firdusi,  
Author of the ever-famous  
Heavenly poem "The Emperor Nameh."

This great epic song he wrote  
At the bidding of the Emperor,  
Who for every line it counted  
Promised him a florin's payment.

Seventeen times the roses blossomed,  
Seventeen times they shed their petals,  
Nightingales their songs uplifted  
Seventeen times and fell to silence,

While the poet sat and pondered,  
Pondered at the loom of thought,  
Day and night, and never resting  
Wove the mighty web of song—

Wove the mighty web, and therein  
Interwove with wondrous craft  
Fabulous stories of his country,  
Farsistan's primeval kings,

Darling heroes of his people,  
Deeds of gentle knights, adventures,  
Great magicians, elves and goblins,  
Quaintly worked with flowery legends

Everything abloom and living,  
Shot with colour, blooming, burning,  
And illumined—how divinely!—  
By the holy light of Iran,

That divine pure light primeval,  
Whose last consecrated fires,  
Spite of Koran, spite of Mufti,  
In the poet's heart were blazing.



When at length his song was finished,  
Then the poet to his patron  
Sent the manuscript, containing  
Twice one hundred thousand verses.

In the bathing-room it was,  
In the bathing-room at Gasna,  
Where the Emperor's swarthy servants  
Chanced to come upon Firdusi—

Every slave a bag of money  
Dragged along, and to the poet  
Kneeling gave it as the noble  
Guerdon for his epic poem.

Hastily the poet, burning  
To behold the long-desired  
Sight of gold, the bags tore open—  
There he found with consternation

That the bags' contents were merely  
Pallid silver, silver florins,  
Numbering twice one hundred thousand  
—Bitterly then laughed the poet.

Laughing bitterly, he took it  
And divided it in three  
Equal portions, and presented  
Two shares to the swarthy servants,

One to each, as compensation  
For their pains, and the remainder  
Handed to a bath attendant,  
Who prepared his bath, as *pourboire*.

Then he took his staff, and straightway  
Bade a farewell to the city ;  
When he stood outside the gate,  
From his shoes the dust he dusted.

## 2

“ If like many other men  
He had merely falsely spoken,  
Promised and his promise broken,  
I had not been angry then.

“ But it cannot pardoned be,  
That he fooled my innocence,  
Using words of double sense,  
Saying nought deceitfully.

“ Dignified in everything,  
Lordly in his form and bearing,  
Few on earth with him comparing,  
He was every inch a king.

“ Seemed he, with his glance of fire,  
Like the sun in heaven bright,  
He the champion of truth’s might—  
And he played the shuffling liar.”

## 3

Lord Mahomet has eaten his fill,  
He looks about him with right good will.

In the garden by twilight, on cushion of gold,  
He sits by the fountain, which plashes cold.

The servants stand round him with reverent  
mien ;

His favourite Ansari among them is seen.

Rising from many a marble urn  
Forests of flowers glow and burn.

Like Houris full of Eastern charms  
The slender palm-trees wave their arms.

Still stand the cypresses, sad gleaming,  
Like holy men of heaven dreaming.

When suddenly to luten strings  
Mysteriously a soft voice sings.

As one possessed, the king upsprung,  
“ Whose words are these that I hear sung ? ”

He asked, and Ansari answered then :  
“ These verses are from Firdusi’s pen.”

“ Firdusi ? ” the king startled cried :  
“ How fares that great poet ? Where doth he  
bide ? ”

Ansari answered : “ Long time indeed  
In misery and utmost need

“ In Thus he has dwelt, his native town ;  
A little garden he there doth own.”

Lord Mahomet a good while silent sate,  
Then spoke : “ The urgency is great——

“ Ansari, open my stable door,  
Choose fifty camels, and mules five score,

“ And load them high with every treasure  
That can to human heart bring pleasure ;

“ With precious things and rarities,  
Raiment, and furniture great in price,

“ Of sandalwood wrought, and ivory,  
With gold and silver trumpery,

“ Fine cups, two-handled water-pots,  
And leopard skins with mighty spots,

“ Shawls, carpets and many a rich brocade,  
All in my own dominions made——

“ Forget not too to add a store  
Of polished weapons and arms galore,

“ And drinks of all sorts, bitter and sweet,  
And divers kinds of potted meat,

“ Crystallised fruit and almond paste,  
And gingerbread for every taste ;

“ Add horses of Arabian breed,  
A dozen, swift with lightning speed ;

“ And dusky slaves, a dozen too,  
With tireless frames of copper hue.

“ Ansari, with all this rich array  
Of gifts, make ready to start straightway,

“ And take them to Thus, with my best regards,  
To great Firdusi, the prince of bards.”

Ansari his lord's behest obeyed,  
On mule and camel the load he laid

Of gifts of honour which far outweighed  
The tribute by one whole province paid.

In three days' time from his native land  
He started forth, and in his hand

A banner red aloft he bore,  
Riding the caravan before.

To Thus they came on the seventh day.  
The town at the foot of a mountain lay.

And through the west gate entered in  
The caravan with clamour and din.

The kettledrums rolled ; the cow-horns rang,  
The song of triumph they loudly sang.

“ La Illa Il Allah ” with one accord  
The lusty camel-drivers roared.

But out from Thus at the same moment  
A funeral procession went,

At the other end through the eastern door,  
And the dead Firdusi to burial bore.

## LAMENTATIONS

### SPANISH ATRIDAE

On the feast-day of St Hubert,  
Thirteen hundred and eighty-three,  
King Henrico at his palace  
In Segovia gave a banquet.

Royal banquets all the world through  
Are the same : and uniformly  
Yawns the same prevailing tedium  
At the tables of all princes.

Services of gold and silver,  
Savoury morsels from all regions,  
And the selfsame leaden taste,  
Smacking of Locusta's cooking.

And the selfsame crowd in satin,  
Gaily dressed, politely nodding,  
Like a flower-bed of tulips ;—  
Nothing varies but the sauces.

And a hum and buzzing round one  
That benumbs the sense like opium,  
Till the blare of trumpets rouse it  
From the stupor of digestion.

Next me by good fortune sat  
Don Diego Albuquerque,  
From whose clever lips came pouring  
Floods of entertaining talk.

He recounted with rare spirit  
Stories from the bloody annals  
Of the epoch of Don Pedro,  
Popularly called " King Cruel."

When I asked him why Don Pedro  
Had his brother Don Fredrego  
Secretly decapitated,  
Said my dinner-neighbour sighing :

“ Do not, Sir, believe the nonsense  
That to loosely-strung guitars  
Muleteers and ballad-singers  
Bawl in pot-houses and taverns.

“ Least of all believe the stories  
Of the love of Don Fredrego  
And Don Pedro's beauteous consort,  
Donna Blanka von Bourbon.

“ 'Twas not jealousy of husband,  
But the grudge of common envy  
That brought death to Don Fredrego,  
Chief of Calatrava's knighthood.

“ For the crime Don Pedro never  
Could forgive him was his fame,  
That great fame which Lady Rumour  
Took delight in trumpeting.

“ And Don Pedro could not pardon  
His nobility of spirit,  
Nor that comeliness of body,  
Matching with his spirit's beauty.

“ Blooming ever in my memory  
Dwells that slender flower of heroes ;  
Ne'er can I forget that lovely  
Dreamy countenance of youth.



“ His indeed was just the beauty  
That the fairies fall in love with,  
And a legendary secret  
Seemed to speak from all his features.

“ Blue his eyes were with a brilliance  
Blinding like a jewel’s flash—  
And in sooth the gritty hardness  
Of a jewel was not lacking.

“ Black his hair, a bluish black,  
Shining with peculiar radiance,  
And in rich luxuriant clusters  
Falling down upon his shoulders.

“ In the fair town of Coimbra,  
Which he conquered from the Moors,  
I beheld him for the last time,  
Poor unhappy prince, alive.

“ He returning from Alkanzor  
Through the narrow streets was riding ;  
Many a lovely Moorish maiden  
Watched behind her window-grating.

“ O’er his head his plume was waving  
Free and showy, but his mantle’s  
Solid Calatrava-Cross  
Scared away all thoughts of dalliance.

“ By his side with bounds of pleasure  
Ran his favourite dog, called Allan ;  
Beast was he of proud descent,  
Born and bred in the Sierra.

“ Notwithstanding his huge bulk  
He was supple as a reindeer,  
And his head was nobly moulded  
Though too nearly like a fox's.

“ Snow-white and as soft as satin  
Hung his long and hairy coat ;  
And with rubies thickly studded  
Was his broad and golden collar.

“ Hid, they say, beneath this collar  
Lay some charm of faithfulness ;  
Never from beside his master  
Did he stir—that faithful hound.

“ O that faithfulness stupendous !  
Even now my heart is trembling  
When I think of how it here  
In our sight was manifested.

“ O that day fulfilled of horror !  
In this very room it happened,  
And I sat here as to-day  
At the royal banquet-table.

“ At this table’s upper end  
Where to-day sits Don Henrico  
Tippling gaily with the flower  
Of Castalian chivalry,

“ Here on that day sat Don Pedro,  
Glum and gloomy, and beside him,  
Beaming proudly like a goddess,  
Sat Maria de Padilla.

“ At this table’s lower end,  
Where to-day we see the lady,  
Whose voluminous lace-ruffle  
Like a shining plate appears—

“ While her little yellow visage  
Puckered in a sourish smile  
Has the semblance of a lemon  
Lying on the aforesaid plate :—

“ At this table’s lower end  
One place still was standing empty ;  
And the gilded chair seemed waiting  
For some guest of high position.

“ Don Fredrego was the guest,  
Whom the gilded chair was meant for—  
Yet he came not—ah ! we now know  
What the cause was that detained him.

“ Ah ! at that same hour the darksome  
Deed of evil was accomplished,  
And the innocent young hero  
By the assassins of Don Pedro

“ Was surprised and overpowered,  
Bound in chains and dragged away  
To a lonesome castle-dungeon  
Only lit by flare of torches.

“ There stood round the headman’s servants,  
There stood too their bloodstained master,  
Who, while resting on his axe,  
Spoke with melancholy mien :

“ ‘ Now, Grand Master of St Jago,  
Must you for your death make ready,  
Just one quarter of an hour  
Is permitted you for prayer.’

“ Don Fredrego knelt him down,  
Prayed with pious resignation ;  
Then he said : ‘ My prayer is finished,’  
And received the stroke of death.

“ At the very selfsame moment,  
When the head was rolling down,  
Up there sprang the faithful Allan,  
Who had followed him unnoticed.

“Fastening on it with his teeth,  
By the hairs he seized the head,  
And with this beloved booty  
Darted off with speed of magic.

“Howls and cries of lamentation,  
All the way he went, resounded  
Through the corridors and chambers,  
Up and down the staircases.

“Since the banquet of Belshazzar  
Never was a dinner-party  
Thrown into such consternation  
As was ours, when thus among us

“Suddenly there sprang the monster  
With the head of Don Fredrego,  
Which between his teeth he dragged  
By the dripping gory hairs.

“To the chair that still stood vacant,  
Destined for his lord, the dog  
Leapt, and with accusing gesture  
Held the head before our eyes.

“Ah! it was that well-beloved,  
That heroic face, but paler,  
But more serious through death,  
And (oh! horrible) encircled

“ By a tangled mass of black hair  
Matted round it, like the savage  
Snaky head-dress of Medusa,  
And indeed as petrifying.

“ Yes, we all were petrified,  
Stared at one another blankly,  
And with etiquette and terror  
Every tongue was paralysed.

“ But Maria de Padilla  
Broke alone the general silence ;  
Wrung her hands, and loudly sobbing  
Bodefully she made lament :

“ ‘ ’Twill be said that I incited  
To this murderous deed of blood,  
And the charge attaints my children,  
My unhappy innocent children ! ’ ”

Don Diego interrupted  
Here his story, for we noticed  
That the tables had been cleared,  
And the court had left the hall.

Then the knight with courtly grace  
Kindly offered me his escort,  
And together we went wandering  
Through the ancient Gothic castle.

When we came to a side-pathway  
Leading to the royal kennels,  
Which by barks and growls already  
From afar betrayed their presence,

There I saw within the wall  
Built, and on the outer side  
Strongly barred with iron grating,  
Like a cage, a prison cell.

And I saw two human figures  
Sitting in it, two young boys,  
Who, with fetters on their legs,  
Cowered in the dirty straw.

Scarcely twelve years old the one seemed,  
And the other slightly older ;  
Fair and noble were their faces,  
But from sickness pale and wizened.

All in rags and nearly naked,  
Their poor wasted bodies showed  
Wounds, the tokens of ill-usage ;  
Both were shivering with fever.

From their depths of misery  
They looked up into my face,  
With such white and spectral eyes  
That they almost terrified me.

“Who are these unhappy creatures?”  
I ejaculated, seizing  
Hold of Don Diego’s hand,  
Which was shaking as I touched it.

Don Diego seemed embarrassed,  
Looked to see that no one listened,  
Deeply sighed, then feigned an easy  
Every-day tone, as he answered :

“These two boys are royal children,  
Who were orphaned young ; King Pedro  
Was their father, and their mother  
Was Maria de Padilla.

“After the great fight at Narva,  
Where Henrico Transmatore  
Set his royal brother Pedro  
Free from the crown’s heavy burden,

“And from that still heavier burden,  
Which we call life, Don Henrico  
Played the rôle of generous victor  
To his brother’s children also.

“Taking interest in their welfare,  
As was fitting in an uncle,  
He in his own castle gave them  
Free of cost both board and lodging.



“Narrow certainly the chamber  
Which he placed at their disposal,  
But in summer it is coolish,  
And not much too cold in winter.

“Rye-bread is their staple food,  
Sweet to taste as though the goddess  
Ceres had herself prepared it  
For her darling Proserpine-kin.

“Often too he gratifies them  
With a basinful of chick-peas,  
And the boys are then aware  
That in Spain the day is Sunday.

“But it is not always Sunday,  
And there are not always chick-peas,  
And the Master of the kennels  
Disciplines them with the whip-lash.

“For the master of the kennels,  
To whose careful supervision  
Dogs and stables are committed  
And the nephews’ cage as well,

“Is himself the hapless husband  
Of that acid little lemon  
With the white and plate-like ruffle,  
Whom we saw to-day at table.

“Such a shrew she is that often  
Her good man will seize his whip—  
And rush here to give the dogs,  
And the poor boys too, a flogging.

“But the king has disapproved of  
Such proceedings, and has ordered  
That they must not for the future  
Treat his nephews like the dogs.

“To no hireling stranger arm  
Will he any longer trust  
Their correction, but from henceforth  
With his own hands will conduct it.”

Suddenly Don Diego stopped,  
For the steward of the palace  
Came to us and asked politely  
If we had enjoyed our dinner.

## HEBREW MELODIES

### THE PRINCESS SABBATH

Fairy stories of Arabia  
Tell us of enchanted princes,  
Who at certain times recover  
Their original fair bodies.

Some disgusting hairy monster  
Turns into a royal prince ;  
Clad in gay and rich apparel,  
Playing love-sick on a flute.

Then the magic moment passes,  
And with sudden transformation  
Lo ! again his royal highness  
Shuffles back into a monster.

Such fate has a prince befallen  
Whom I now besing. His name is  
Israel. A sorcerer's magic  
Has transformed him to a cur.

Cur, with currish inclinations,  
During all the week he wallows  
In life's filthiness and sweepings,  
By the gutter-snipes derided.

But on every Friday evening,  
Suddenly at twilight hour,  
Snaps the spell ; the cur becomes  
Once again a human creature.

Human, and with human feelings,  
He, with head and heart uplifted,  
Dressed in spruce and festal garments,  
Enters his paternal mansion.

“Hail, all hail, thou well-beloved  
Mansion of my royal father ;  
Tent of Jacob, I salute thy  
Holy door-posts with a kiss.”

Through the house a shudder goes,  
A mysterious stir and rustling ;  
'Tis the temple's unseen master  
Breathing through the awful silence.

Silence ! only the seneschal  
(*Vulgo* synagogue-attendant)  
Fussily skips hither thither,  
Lighting up the church's lamps.

Golden lights so full of comfort,  
How they gleam and how they glimmer !  
Bravely also flare the candles  
On the edge of the Almemor.

By the shrine that holds the sacred  
Torah, and is closely curtained  
By a veil of costly satin,  
Flashing brilliantly with jewels—

There already by his pulpit  
Stands the little singing-master,  
Smartly dressed, with his black mantle  
Pertly thrown across his shoulders.

Just to show how white his hand is  
See him clasp his throat, and quaintly  
Press his finger on his temples  
And his thumb upon his windpipe.

Softly to himself he's humming,  
Till at last in jubilation  
He uplifts his voice and sings ;  
" Lecho Daudi Likras Kalle ! "

" Lecho Daudi Likras Kalle —  
Come, beloved, for already  
Waits thy bride, who in thy presence  
Shall unveil her modest face."

This delightful bridal-anthem  
Was composed by the all-famous  
World-renownèd Minnesinger,  
Don Jehuda ben Halevy.

And the subject celebrated  
In the song is Israel's marriage  
With the lady Princess Sabbath,  
Who is called the quiet princess.

Pearl and flower of all beauty  
Is the princess. Not more fair  
Was the queen herself of Sheba,  
Bosom-friend of Solomon,

Who, an Ethiop blue-stocking,  
Strove to shine by dint of *esprit*,  
And with her ingenious riddles  
In the end became a bore.

But the Princess Sabbath, being  
Quietude itself incarnate,  
Holds in utter detestation  
Strife of wits and controversy.

Deadly, too, to her the antics  
Of declamatory passion,  
That excitement which rampages  
Wildly with dishevelled hair.

Modestly the quiet princess  
In a cap conceals her tresses ;  
Meek as a gazelle she glances,  
Steps as lightly as a chamois.

She allows her dearest all things—  
All things but tobacco-smoking—  
“ Dearest, smoking is forbidden,  
For to-day the Sabbath is.

“ But instead, for compensation,  
You shall taste to-day at noontide  
Food in very truth celestial—  
You to-day shall feast on *schalet* ! ”

“Schalet, lovely spark of godhead,  
Daughter of Elysium !”

Surely Schiller’s ode had run thus  
Had he ever tasted schalet.

Schalet is the food of heaven,  
Which the dear Lord God Himself  
Once taught Moses how to serve up  
On the mount of Sinai,

Where the all-highest Father likewise  
In a thunderstorm delivered  
All the creed of true religion,  
And the holy Ten Commandments.

Schalet of the one and true God  
Is the kosher-like ambrosia,  
Blessed food of Paradise ;  
And compared with such a savour

Merely trash and devil’s dirt  
Is the ambrosia of the spurious  
Heathen deities of Greece,  
Who were devils in disguise.

When the prince such food partakes of,  
Then his eyes begin to sparkle,  
And his waistcoat he unbuttons,  
And he speaks, in rapture smiling ;

“Hear I not the Jordan murmur ?  
Are not those the plashing fountains  
In the palm-tree vale of Bethel,  
By the camp-ground of the camels ?

“Hear I not the tinkling sheep-bells ?  
Are not those the well-fed wethers  
That the shepherd drives at eve-tide,  
From the Gilead mountain-pastures ? ”

But the happy day is passing ;  
Fast on lanky shadow-legs  
Striding comes the evil hour  
Of enchantment.—The prince sighs.

’Tis as though the icy fingers  
Of a sorcerer clutched his heart-strings ;  
And his shuddering frame already  
Feels its currish transformation.

To the prince the princess offers  
Her gold casket of sweet spices,  
And he smells it slowly, tasting  
Once again the fragrant perfumes.

To the prince presents the princess  
Likewise too the farewell-potion—  
And he drinks it quickly, leaving  
But a few drops in the cup.



These he sprinkles on the table,  
Then he takes a little taper  
And he dips it in the moisture ;  
So it splutters and goes out.

## LAST POEMS

1853-1855

### 3

GREEN grow the woods and the meadows,  
The lark is singing aloft,  
And spring is here with her shadows,  
Her perfumes and colours soft.

The song of the lark has broken  
The frost that bound me so long,  
And out of my heart has awoken  
A mournful and dirge-like song.

“ What means it, thy tale of pity ? ”  
Soft-trilling the lark doth cry.  
It is a song, my pretty,  
I sang in the years gone by.

Heart-broken I've sung this ditty  
The greenwood trees among ;  
Thine own grandmother, my pretty,  
Has listened to this song.

## 4

I thought on her the live-long day,  
And thought on her for half the night,  
And when in slumber deep I lay,  
A dream hath brought her to my sight.

She sits there, bright as a young rose,  
And sunk in sweet contentment deep,  
A tambour on her lap, she sews,  
Embroidering little white-faced sheep.

She looks so sweet nor guesses quite  
Why I stand there so piteously.  
“What makes thy face so ashy-white?  
O Heinrich, say, what aileth thee?”

She looks so sweet, and with surprise  
My bitter tears she seems to see.  
“Why do those tears bedew thine eyes?  
O Heinrich, say, what aileth thee?”

She looks at me with glances mild,  
While I to die am almost fain.  
“What aileth me is thou, my child,  
And in my breast here dwells my pain.”

Then rising, she her hand doth lay  
Right solemnly upon my breast;  
Lo! all my sorrows fled away,  
And I awoke me glad and blest.

## 5

I will be gone to the forest green,  
Where flowers do grow and birds do sing ;  
For when in the grave I come to lie,  
The earth will cover up ear and eye,  
By me no more will flowers be seen,  
No more for me bird-music ring.

## 8

Day and night at verse I wrought,  
Yet at end accomplished nought ;  
Deep in harmony I swum,  
Yet to nothing did I come.

## 9

How much I love you, Mopsy,  
You fully understand,  
And when I feed you with sugar  
You like to lick my hand.

A dog you are, and always  
Contented to be such ;  
The rest of my acquaintance  
Dissemble far too much.

## BIMINI

## PROLOGUE

Faith in wonders ! that blue flower  
Now has withered, but how lovely  
Once in human hearts it blossomed,  
In the time of which my song is !

Time of faith in wonders ! wondrous  
Time itself ! So many wonders  
Then abounded that thereat  
No one any longer wondered.

Often in the broad cool daylight  
Of an ordinary work-day  
Men would see things, things of wonder,  
Such as in degree of madness

Far exceeded even the maddest  
Fairy tales enshrined in legends  
Told of pious brain-sick monks,  
Or in chronicles of knighthood.

Lo ! one morn in bride-like beauty  
From the Ocean's azure billows  
There arose a strange sea-wonder,  
A whole world completely new.

New the world and all upon it,  
New the men, and new the wild-beasts,  
New the birds, the trees, the flowers,  
Also new the world's diseases !

And the while our old world also,  
Our familiar ancient world,  
Metamorphosed and transfigured,  
Strange and wonderful became

Through the inventions of the Spirit,  
Of the modern magic Spirit,  
Through the black art of Black Berthold  
And the still more subtle black art

Of a Mainz-born Devil-layer ;  
Also through the grammar  
In those sacred Books prevailing,  
Brought to us by bearded wizards

From Byzantium and from Egypt  
And sagaciously expounded—  
One is called the Book of Beauty,  
And the Book of Truth the other.

But of both is God the author,  
God Himself, using two different  
Heavenly tongues, and he hath writ them,  
We believe, in his own writing.

With the little quivering needle  
As his rod of divination  
Did the sailor also then  
Find a way to India's shore,

To the long-sought land of spices,  
Where on every side were growing  
In a negligent profusion,  
Often with their tendrils creeping

Low upon the earth, fantastic  
Herbs and flowers, shrubs and forests,  
Which are princes or crown-jewels  
In the vegetable-realm ;

Those miraculous rare spices,  
Pregnant with mysterious powers,  
Giving often health, more often  
Sickness, to mankind, according

As the hand which mixes them  
Be a skilled apothecary's,  
Or belong to some dull fellow  
From the land of Hungary.

When the gates of India's garden  
One day fell asunder, balmy  
Billowy oceans of sweet incense,  
Like a deluge of delightful

Luscious aromatic perfumes,  
Sense-enchancing, sense-benumbing,  
Flooded suddenly the heart,  
The old heart of the old world.

Then as if by fire-brands smitten,  
Rods of flame, the blood went racing  
Instantly through human veins,  
Mad for pleasure, mad for gold.

Gold alone was then the watch-word,  
For through gold, that yellow pander,  
Each man for himself can purchase  
Easily all earthly pleasures.

So was gold the first word spoken  
By the Spaniard on his entrance  
To the wigwam of the Indian—  
Afterwards he asked for water.

Mexico and Peru witnessed  
This wild orgy of gold-thirst,  
Cortez and Pizarro wallowed  
Steeped in gold, and gold-besotted.

From the temple-tower of Quito  
Lopez Bacca stole the sun  
Which twelve hundredweight of gold  
Weighed, but on the selfsame evening,



As he played at dice, he lost it.  
Hence the saying of the people,  
“That is Lopez, who by gambling  
Lost the sun before the sunrise.”

Ah ! These men were mighty gamblers,  
Mighty robbers and assassins,  
(Nobody is wholly perfect),  
Yet the deeds they did were wonders,

Far surpassing the achievements  
Of the fiercest martial heroes,  
From the mighty Holofernes  
Down to Haynau and Radetzki.

In the time of faith in wonders  
There are also wonder-workers ;  
Who the impossible believes in  
Can the impossible accomplish.

Then the fools alone were doubters,  
Men of sense were all believers ;  
At the sight of daily wonders  
Wise men bowed their heads believing.

Strange ! to-day from out that wondrous  
Time of faith in wonders, echoes  
Ever through my mind the story  
Of Don Juan Ponce de Leon,

Who had Florida discovered,  
But for years and years went seeking  
Vainly for the wonder-island,  
Bimini, his heart's desire !

Bimini ! thy name sweet-sounding  
Makes my heart within my breast  
Tremble, and the long-forgotten  
Dreams of youth again awaken.

On their heads are withered garlands,  
Mournfully they gaze upon me ;  
Nightingales are softly fluting,  
Sobbing as they bleed to death—

And I start up, terror-stricken,  
All my feverish limbs so shaking  
That the seams of my fool's-jacket  
Violently burst asunder.

Yet at last I fall a-laughing  
For methinks that parrots' voices  
Screech, in mocking tones and yet  
Melancholy, " Bimini ! "

Help me, Muse, wise mountain-fairy  
Of Parnassus, child of heaven,  
Stand by me and prove the magic  
Of the noble art poetic.

Show thou hast the witch's skill,  
Wave thy wand and turn my song  
To a ship, a magic ship,  
Bearing me to Bimini !

Hardly is the sentence spoken,  
Ere my wish hath its fulfilment,  
And descending from thought's dockyard  
Lo ! the magic ship is launched.

Who will come to Bimini ?  
Step in, gentlemen and ladies !  
This ship, wind and weather serving,  
Carries you to Bimini.

Are you sufferers from gout,  
Noble gentlemen ? Fair ladies,  
Have you on your foreheads white  
Found already one small crease ?

Follow me to Bimini,  
Quickly there will you recover  
From such shameful imperfections ;  
Hydropathic is the cure !

Fear nought, gentlemen and ladies,  
Sound and solid is my ship :  
Out of trochees, strong as oak-trees,  
Keel and planks are fabricated.

At the helm is sitting Fancy,  
Cheerful Humour swells the sails,  
Cabin-boy is Wit, the nimble ;  
Is Good Sense on board ? I know not !

Metaphors provide my yard-arms  
And hyperboles my main-mast,  
Black and red and gold my ensign,  
Of Romance the fabled colours—

Tricolor of Barbarossa,  
As I once myself have seen it  
In Kyffhäuser and at Frankfort  
In the great church of St Paul.—

Through the sea of fairyland,  
Through the fairyland's blue sea,  
Glides my ship, my magic ship,  
Followed by her dreamlike furrows.

Scattering sparks before my face  
In the quivering azure wave,  
Splashing, tumbling, play a shoal  
Of enormous-headed dolphins—

And astride their backs are riding  
My postilions of the water,  
Little Cupids, who with puffed cheeks  
Blow on quaint horns, made from mussels,

Echoing fanfares—ah, but listen !  
From the ocean depths below  
Suddenly there comes a pealing  
Sound of mirth and tittering laughter.

Ah ! those voices, well I know them,  
Those sweet tones of scoffing laughter—  
They are pert and saucy Undines,  
Unbelieving Nixies, mocking

Me, my fool's ship, and the fools  
Who are passengers aboard it,  
Mocking my fool's voyaging  
To the isle of Bimini.

## I

Lonely on the shore of Cuba,  
By the quiet water's mirror  
Stands a man in contemplation  
Of his image in the wave.

Old he is, yet in his carriage  
Bolt upright and like a Spaniard,  
Half a sailor, half a soldier,  
In his queer outlandish garments.

Widely bulge his sailor's trousers  
Underneath a coat of yellow  
Elkskin ; shines with rich-embroidered  
Gold brocade his bandoleer.

From it hangs the never-absent  
Long bright sword-blade of Toledo,  
On his grey felt hat there flutter  
Roguishly the red cock's feathers.

And they throw a gloomy shadow  
O'er an old face, weather-beaten,  
Showing marks of time's defacement  
And his fellowmen's misuse.

Intersecting with the wrinkles,  
That old age and life's misfortunes  
Have imprinted, run the ugly  
Scars of sabre-cuts ill-mended.

Truly not with any special  
Satisfaction seems the old man  
To be gazing in the water  
At his pitiful reflection.

But as if to hide it from him  
Both hands oft he stretches out ;  
Then he shakes his head, and sighing  
Mutters to himself at last :—

“ Is this Juan Ponce de Leon,  
Who was court-page at the castle  
Of Don Gomez and train-bearer  
To the judge's haughty daughter ?

“ Slim and airy was that lad,  
And his gold locks fell in clusters  
Round a head filled full of folly,  
Full of rosy-coloured fancies.

“ All the ladies of Sevilla  
Knew the hoof-beat of his charger,  
And they crowded to the windows  
When he galloped down the street.

“ If he called his dogs by clicking  
With his tongue against the palate,  
Then the hearts of deeply-blushing  
Lovely women thrilled with music.

“ Is this Juan Ponce de Leon,  
Once the terror of the Moors,  
Whose beturbaned heads he chopped off  
Just as if they were but thistles ?

“ On the plain before Granada,  
And in sight of the assembled  
Host of Christians, Don Gonzalos  
Dubbed me with the rank of knighthood.

“ On the evening of that same day  
In the tent of the Infanta,  
I, to music of the fiddle,  
Danced with beautiful court-ladies.

“ Yet ’twas neither fiddle’s music,  
Nor the talk of lovely ladies,  
That I harkened on the evening  
Of that day—but like a young colt

“ I went stamping o’er the tent’s floor,  
Hearing nothing but the jingle,  
Nothing but the lovely jingle  
Of my new and golden spurs.

“ With the years came earnestness  
And ambition, and I followed  
With Columbus on his second  
Famous world-discovering voyage.

“ With devotion did I serve him,  
That new Christopher so mighty,  
Who salvation’s light was bearing  
O’er the water to the heathen.

“ Ne’er shall I forget the mildness  
Of his glance. He suffered silent,  
Only in the night-time telling  
To the stars and waves his sorrows.

“ When the admiral again came  
Home to Spain, then I took service  
With Ojeda, and went sailing  
With him, seeking new adventures.



“ Don Ojeda was a true knight,  
Every inch of him, none better  
'Mong the knights of the round table  
In the days of good King Arthur.

“ Fighting, fighting was the pleasure  
Of his heart. Serenely smiling  
He would fight against the savage  
Hordes that often swarmed around him.

“ If a poisoned javelin hit him,  
Straight he seized a red-hot glowing  
Iron, and therewith his wound  
Touched and seared, serenely smiling.

“ Once, when more than knee-deep wading  
Through a boggy swamp, whose outlet  
No one knew, and step by step,  
Lacking food, and lacking water,

“ We had thirty days already  
Dragged along, and of six score men  
More than eighty had already  
Fallen on the march and fainted—

“ And the bog grew ever deeper,  
And we cried aloud, despairing,—  
Then Ojeda spake and cheered us,  
Dauntless and serenely smiling.

“ Afterwards I fought as comrade  
To Bilbao ; hero he  
No less valiant than Ojeda,  
And in strategy more skilful.

“ For within his head there nested  
All thought’s mighty brood of eagles,  
While the splendour of great courage  
Shone within his heart like sunlight.

“ To his deeds do Spain’s dominions  
Owe a hundred kingdoms, larger  
Far than Europe and far richer  
Than Venetia and than Flanders.

“ And by way of compensation  
For these hundred kingdoms, larger  
Far than Europe and far richer  
Than Venetia or than Flanders,

“ He was given a hempen collar—  
Just a rope ; and, like a felon,  
Bilbao at St Sebastian  
In the market-place was hanged.

“ Not so chivalrous a fellow,  
And of less heroic spirit,  
Yet a captain without equal  
Was the Cortez, Don Fernando.

“ In the miniature Armada  
By which Mexico was conquered  
Served I, nor did this adventure  
Lack its share of grievous hardships.

“ There I got large stores of gold,  
But the yellow fever also—  
Ah ! in Mexico a goodly  
Piece of health I left behind me.

“ With the gold I bought a vessel,  
And equipped it.—Then confiding  
In my own star, I discovered  
Here at last the isle of Cuba,

“ Which to this day I am ruling  
For Juanna of Castilia  
And Fernand of Aragon,  
My most condescending patrons.

“ I have that attained which people  
Ever greedily run after ;  
Prince’s favour, fame, and honour,  
And the Calatrava Order.

“ I am governor, and owner  
Of a hundred thousand pesos,  
Bars of gold and precious jewels,  
Sacks of pearls of purest lustre.

“ Ah ! but sad the contemplation  
Of these pearls ; they set me thinking  
How far better had I only  
Teeth instead, as in my young days—

“ Teeth of youth ! with their departure  
Youth, as well as teeth, hath vanished—  
At the shameful thought I feebly  
Gnash their rotten stumps together.

“ Teeth of youth, and youth ! if only  
I could buy you back together,  
Gladly would I give instead  
All my fairest pearls in sackfuls.

“ Yea, and all my wealth of jewels,  
All my gold, a hundred thousand  
Pesos, and into the bargain  
Throw my Calatrava Order—

“ Take my riches, fame, position,  
Call me no more ‘ Excellency ’ ;  
Call me rather ‘ Little jackass,’  
‘ Little monkey, blockhead, shaver.’

“ O thou Virgin, highly-favoured,  
To the fool extend thy mercy,  
Who in secret shame is pining  
And conceals his idle sorrow !

“ Virgin ! I my heart will open  
To thee only, and confession  
Make to thee, which I had never  
Made to any Saint in heaven—

“ For indeed these Saints but men are,  
And, I swear it, even in heaven  
Shall no man in pity dare to  
Laugh at Juan Ponce de Leon.

“ Thou, O Virgin, art a woman,  
And, albeit immutable  
Thy pure beauty, yet thou feelest  
With a woman’s subtle instinct

“ What he suffers, the unhappy  
Transient mortal, when his body’s  
Noble strength and excellence  
Fade and dwindle to a shadow !

“ Ah, far happier than we  
Are the trees, whom altogether  
One and the same wind of autumn  
Of their leafy robes strips naked—

“ All of them stand bare in winter,  
There is no young shrub among them,  
Whose green leafage is an insult  
To his withered forest-comrades.

“ Ah ! but with us mortals, each one  
Lives his own appointed season ;  
While to this one it is winter,  
To that other it is spring time ;

“ And the old man feels his weakness  
Doubly sad, in contemplation  
Of o’erflowing youthful vigour—  
O thou Virgin, highly-favoured !

“ Banish, prithee, from my members  
This old age, whose hand like winter  
On my head has heaped the snow,  
And has turned my blood to ice—

“ Bid the Sun that he rekindle  
In my veins the glow of passion,  
Bid the Spring that she awaken  
In my breast the nightingales—

“ And your roses, give them once more  
To my cheeks, and give the fair hair  
Once more to my head, O Virgin—  
Give me once again my youth ! ”

While Don Juan Ponce de Leon  
Spoke in such wise to himself,  
Suddenly with sorrow clouded  
In his hands his face he buried,

And he sobbed and fell a-weeping  
With such strong and stormy passion  
That the shining tears in torrents  
Poured between his skinny fingers.

## 2

On the land the knight bides faithful  
To his old seafaring habits,  
And he still, as once on board ship,  
Sleeps at night-time in a hammock ;

And the water's undulation  
Which so oft to sleep has lulled him,  
This he cannot now dispense with,  
So he sets the hammock rocking.

And this duty falls to Kala,  
An old Indian woman, who  
With her fan of peacock's feathers  
From the knight wards off mosquitoes.

As she rocks the airy cradle  
With the wizen babe within it,  
She for lullaby is crooning  
An old folk-song of her country.

Is there magic in the verses ?  
Or in the old woman's voice  
Piping shrilly, like the twitter  
Of a sparrow ? And she sings :

“ Little wee bird, Kolibri,  
Lead us on to Bimini ;  
Fly before us, we will follow  
In our boats bedecked with banners.

“ Little wee fish, Bridibi,  
Lead us on to Bimini ;  
Swim before us, we will follow  
With our masts enwreathed in garlands.

“ On the isle of Bimini  
Spring’s delights are ever blooming,  
And the golden larks are trilling  
Anthems in the azure sky.

“ Slender flowers in wild profusion  
Clothe the earth there like Savannahs,  
Hot with passion steam the perfumes,  
Wantonly the colours riot.

“ Towering o’er the rest great palm-trees  
Stand and wave their fanlike branches,  
Blowing to the flowers beneath them  
Shadow-kisses, boons of coolness.

“ On the isle of Bimini  
Springs the loveliest of fountains ;  
From the precious wonder-well  
Flows the youth-restoring water.



“ If perchance a faded flower  
With a few drops of this water  
Be bedewed, it blooms again  
Radiant with a new-born beauty.

“ If perchance a withered twig  
With a few drops of this water  
Be bedewed, again it puts forth  
Tender buds of lovely greenness.

“ If an old man drink this water  
He turns young again, and old age  
Casts behind him, like a beetle  
From his chrysalis emerging.

“ Many a greybeard, who his flaxen  
Youth has won again by drinking,  
Has not dared to face his country  
Looking like a callow stripling.

“ Many a little mother likewise,  
To her youth restored by sipping,  
Has not ventured to go homeward  
Looking like an upstart hussy.

“ So they linger, these good people,  
Evermore in Bimini ;  
Joy and springtime hold them prisoners  
In the land of youth eternal. . . .

“ To the land of youth eternal,  
To the isle of Bimini,  
All my hopes and longings lead me ;  
Fare ye well, my friends belovèd !

“ Mimili, my dear old cat,  
Kikriki, my dear old cock,  
Farewell, never come we back,  
Nevermore from Bimini ! ”

So the woman sang. In slumber  
Plunged, the knight her singing hearkens ;  
And, as if he dreamed, he sometimes  
Stammers childlike : “ Bimini ! ”

## 3

Brightly lies, the sunshine lighting  
Sea and shore, the isle of Cuba ;  
From the blue air sounds like viols  
Everywhere to-day are ringing.

Rosy from spring's wanton kisses,  
In her emerald-coloured raiment  
Gaily 'tired, like a bride,  
Blossoms and glows the lovely island.

On the shore in shining garments  
Folk of every age and station  
Swarm, and yet the hearts within them  
Beat as if with one pulsation.

For one thought of consolation  
All has seized and all made happy  
Equally. 'Tis manifested  
In the quiet joyful trembling

Of an ancient Beguin woman,  
Who goes hobbling on her crutches,  
While her rosary-beads she fingers,  
And her Paternoster mumbles—

It is also manifested,  
This same thought of consolation,  
In the laughter of the lady,  
Who in gilded palanquin

Borne, and in her mouth a flower  
Holding, flirts with the Hidalgo,  
While he walks in cheery humour,  
Curling his moustache, beside her.—

Like a smile upon a soldier's  
Stolid features, joy is shining  
On the faces of the clergy,  
Now for once unwrinkled, human.

With what glee the thin black-coated  
Parson rubs his hands ! how gaily !  
How the Capuchin, pot-bellied,  
Smugly strokes his double-chin !

Even the bishop, who looks sullen  
As a rule, when celebrating,  
If on that account his breakfast  
Has to suffer some delay—

Even the bishop smiles all radiant ;  
Radiant sparkle the carbuncles  
On his nose, and in his festal  
Robes he toddles on contented

'Neath the purple canopy,  
Censed by choristers, and followed  
By a multitude of clergy,  
Who with gold brocade are covered,

And above their heads are holding  
Golden-coloured parasols,  
Looking very like enormous  
Mushrooms that have gone out walking.

To God's table the procession  
Winds its way, to the high altar,  
Which beneath the open heaven  
On the beach had been erected,

And with flowers made beautiful,  
Images of Saints, palms, ribands,  
Silver vessels and gold spangles,  
And wax candles gaily shining.

Here his Eminence the Bishop  
Sings High Mass upon the sea-shore,  
And with incense and with prayer  
He will here pronounce the blessing

On the little fleet of vessels,  
Which, within the roadstead tossing,  
Are upon the point of sailing  
To the isle of Bimini.

Yes, the ships there, they are truly  
Those which Juan Ponce de Leon  
Has equipped and duly manned  
For discovery of the island,

Where the youth-restoring water  
Springs delicious.—Many thousand  
Blessings from the shore pursue him,  
Him, the human race's saviour,

Him, the world's brave benefactor—  
All have hopes the knight may bring them,  
When he comes again to Cuba,  
Youth's elixir in a phial.

Some in thought already swallow  
That sweet cordial, and are skipping  
For sheer pleasure, like the anchored  
Craft within the roadstead lying.

Five in number are the vessels  
Which compose the fleet—one heavy  
Caravel, with two feluccas,  
And two little brigantines.

Flagship of the fleet the heavy  
Caravel, upon whose ensign  
Are the coats of arms of Castille,  
Arragon and Leon blazoned.

Like a tabernacle-booth  
She is decked out with green boughs,  
And festooned with flowery garlands  
And bright gaily-flapping streamers.

Frau Speranza is her name,  
And there stands the lady's image  
At the stern as figurehead,  
Large as life, and carved of oak-wood,

And bepainted with the very  
Choicest of well-varnished colours,  
Which defy the wind and weather,—  
An impressive spectacle.

Brick-red are her face's features,  
Brick-red are her neck and bosom,  
Which from a green bodice spring ;  
And her gown is also green.

Green the wreath too round her head,  
Pitch-black is her hair, and pitch-black  
Likewise are her eyes and eyebrows ;  
In her hand she holds an anchor.

The flotilla's crew consists of  
Nine-score persons altogether,  
More or less ; among them are  
Six priests only, and six women.

Eighty men and but one lady  
On the caravel are sailing,  
Which Don Juan Ponce de Leon  
Doth himself command. The lady's

Name is Kala—yes, the ancient  
Kala has become a lady,  
Called Señora Juanita,  
Ever since the knight created

Her High Mistress of the Fly-fan,  
And Chief Cradle-rocking Lady,  
And Cupbearer to the future  
Youthful folk of Bimini.

In her hand she holds a golden  
Cup as symbol of her office,  
And she also wears a tunic  
Highly girdled, like a Hebe.

Brussels lace of priceless value,  
Strings of pearls, full many a dozen,  
Clothe and seem to mock the withered  
Dusky charms of the Señora.

Rococo—anthropophagic,  
Caraibisch—Pompadour,  
Rises her well-padded head-dress,  
Interlaced with countless little

Birds diminutive as beetles,  
Looking in the flashing beauty  
Of their rainbow-coloured plumage  
Just like flowers made out of jewels.

This fantastic head-dress, wrought  
All of birds, exactly matches  
With the cockatoo-like features,  
Quaint and wonderful, of Kala.

To this scarecrow no unworthy  
Pair is Juan Ponce de Leon,  
Who, implicitly believing  
In his quick rejuvenescence,

Has adopted prematurely  
The costume of charming youth,  
And has gaily decked himself  
In the freakish garb of fashion :



Pointed shoes, with bells of silver,  
Like a dandy's, and slashed breeches,  
Showing different-coloured legs,  
One—the right leg—red, and green,

Striped with bars of green, the left—  
Satin jacket puffed out nicely,  
Dashing short cloak o'er his shoulders—  
Cap stuck with three ostrich feathers.

Thus caparisoned, and holding  
In his hands a lute, goes skipping  
Up and down the admiral,  
Dealing out his naval orders.

He commands that they weigh anchor  
At the very selfsame moment  
When from shore the signals flashing  
Tell that High Mass is concluded.

He commands that, as they set sail,  
All the ships with all their cannons,  
Firing six-and-thirty volleys,  
Shall salute the isle of Cuba.

He commands—and laughs and top-like  
Spins upon his heel—his senses  
With sweet hope of the enchanting  
Dream-drink quite intoxicated—

And he makes his wretched lute-strings  
Whimper sadly as he plucks them,  
And his cracked old voice he raises,  
Bleating out the sing-song doggrel :

“ Little wee bird Kolibri,  
Little wee fish Bridibi,  
Fly and swim ahead, and show us  
How to go to Bimini ! ”

## 4

Juan Ponce de Leon truly  
Was no fool, no flighty dreamer,  
When he went on his wild-goose chase  
To the isle of Bimini.

As to that isle's true existence  
No misgivings had he ever—  
His old Kala'a lullaby-song  
Was his bond and guarantee.

More than other men, the sailor  
Is in wonders a believer ;  
Always present to his sight  
Flame the great celestial wonders,

While incessantly around him  
Murmurs the mysterious ocean,  
From whose bosom once there came forth  
Lady Venus Aphrodite.

In the following trochaics  
We will tell the simple story  
How the knight endured much hardship,  
Manifold distress and trouble.—

Ah ! instead of finding medicines,  
Old infirmities for healing,  
He, poor soul, encountered many  
New diseases and afflictions.

While for youth he was a-seeking,  
Daily was he growing older,  
Till with wasted form and wrinkled  
To the land he came at last ;

To the quiet land, where sheltered  
Under spreading cypress-shadows  
Flows a stream, whose water also  
Has the magic gift of healing.—

That good water's name is Lethe !  
Drink thereof, and thou forgettest  
All thy sorrow—yea and likewise  
All that thou hast ever suffered.—

O good water ! O good land !  
He who once hath come there leaves it  
Nevermore.—This land in sooth  
Is the isle of Bimini.













